I

Introduction

Whenever I stepped out of my house, on the way, I would come across a number of shrines. The fathomless essence that these shrines stand for in Kashmir often leaves one wonderstruck. Visiting a shrine, as a kid, meant lots of toys, good food and fun filled travel. My mind could see nothing beyond this aura of gaiety. But, over the years a visit to the shrine acquired a new definition. Seeing people's immense faith and devotion while flocking to the shrines at any time __ be it at dawn, dusk or working hour, and in any season __ made me inquisitive. Everywhere I observed people entreating the Sufi in all earnestness. Despondent faces seemed to brighten up at a mere glimpse of the shrine. Their reliance was boundless. Even an attempt to efface this trust appeared out of question. In fact, the dependency got deeper on approaching the shrine. And to think who these people would confide in __ a Sufi whom one cannot see but whose haunting presence as the believers claim to feel constantly, is mind boggling.

I marvelled at the way people who, in this strife torn world, pinned their hopes on the Sufi for receiving succour. There was not even an iota of despair in their pining. The Sufi's shrine was that last thread of hope they clung to. How much truth does the old adage that faith can work miracles hold here. It is said that hopelessness is a sign of infidelity. Here, even a

glimmer of hope (in the efficacy of the shrines) left no room for infidelity. A pilgrim's conviction was to be seen to believe.

What further reinforced this fact was the intonation of *Khatmat* in a resounding voice. This practice would on some days continue till noon. I inferred that the motive of visit could not always be mundane but spiritual too.

Then on the days preceding the *'urs*, the shrine would be daintily decorated. The schedule connected with the *'urs* celebrations would be splashed in all the local dailies.

Another important dimension of the Muslim religious life at the shrines was the presence of women in large numbers. Not only did they participate in various rituals observed in the shrines, but also offered congregational prayers with great devotion. The significant participation of Kashmiri women in rituals associated with the shrines pointed to a certain degree of freedom enjoyed by them. The notion of Islam being a male dominated religion thus appeared false in its manifestation in the regional context. The unswerving loyalty of the womenfolk to a Sufi was also expressed in the singing of *wanwun* or Kashmiri folk songs. These particular songs are dedicated wholly and earnestly to the Sufi. Hundreds of women grouped together singing *wanwun* with enthusiastic diligence was a heart-warming sight to behold. The fact that these women, in spite of being busy with their household chores, put aside a couple of hours on several days and nights preceding the *'urs* only to sing *wanwun* in praise of a Sufi was a feeling I am unable to comprehend.

And when the Valley witnessed an era of turbulence, the ravages of rough and immoderate vehemence reminded one of life's vulnerability. Surprisingly, ghastly antipathetic acts never deterred the wayfarers from frequenting the shrines. The shrines had life beyond. What if the toll from acts of terror went up, the Valley bounced back and there was no disruption in the spiritual mission. Devotees thronged the shrines to soak in their pristine spirituality. These were the quintessential serene places. The shrines gave vibes of composure and graciousness. There was an unruffled calm and mellowness. Acts of hatred did not bring about any changes in the age-old rituals, offering of prayers in congregation etc. The pilgrims, through their devotional sojourns, wanted to honour the tradition of these sacred places and show that neither did they approve and nor

were they afraid of violence. So here it was devotion, spirituality and peace that triumphed over terror. Devotees stood together for peace. While engrossed in prayers, they actively illumined the psyche. People thronging the shrines experienced cleansing and purifying of the mind _ for the mind alone harbours obstructions and the mind alone can release them as well. Earlier I thought the shrines had preserved art, culture and tradition. Now I may safely say that they have immortalized faith and peace.

These places certainly have soul. I was touched by the devotional zeal and soulfulness exhibited by the wayfarers. I could not help thinking that these places would never be bereft of such pilgrims. An attitude of awesome regard tinged with ardour prevailed. Generally, the response evoked was that of intense love, gratitude, enduring loyalty and emotional respect.

Another observation of mine was the promotion of charity at the shrines. When the pilgrims besought favours they made a commitment to give alms to the poor or perform a similar virtuous deed on the fulfillment of their wishes.[1] And once a pledge was made, they would regard it as an obligation to honour it come what may. This might seem like a 'taking and giving' process to some but one cannot deny that this way an underlying magnanimity of the pilgrims comes forth. Further, I noticed that there are some shrines where public kitchens continue to function even now.

Visiting a shrine itself is an enchanting experience. The shrine complex presents an alluring ambience. It is a unique world out there. What I beheld was the assembling of different sorts of visitors from every nook and corner of the Valley. What fascinated me was their lifelong conviction. And this made me think about the purpose behind their visits. Accordingly, I categorized the pilgrims on the basis of intent. One category that came in sizeable numbers had routine hankering for worldly materials. The other, a rarity, came with immaterial intentions. The former brought along with them offerings _ the rich came with opulent gifts and the poor with humble ones. These visitors offered prayers (*namaz*), *fatiha* etc. and left. The latter, however, remained quietly engrossed in prayers. They sat with rapt expression reciting verses of the Qur'an. It seemed as if their spiritual query and soul-searching would never end. And for me what appeared to be a never-ending

quest was to unravel the indiscernible fact that made visitors of all sorts so optimistic.

With many unanswered questions lurking in my mind, I decided to put a stop to my cravings by working on it. Finally, I arrived at a conclusion that for the devotees, one of the forms of God's beneficence and concern for mankind is manifested in the Sufi's love and solicitude for them. This enigmatic bonding between the reverent and the revered is not a matter of human comprehension or rationality but a blessing from the Almighty to be received with humility, in faith and with noble intents and a pure heart.

FOOTNOTE

1. "I never yet heard of an Englishman having anything stolen by a Cashmerie, and have very rarely heard of theft among themselves.....In the cities, especially in Srinagar, food and money are given to all of the poor who may come to ask for them from the houses of those who are tolerably well off, on the 11th of every month, as well as on all their sacred day, and especially on the occasion of the Ede, and throughout the month of Ramadan."

Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment* (S.N. Gadru, ed., *Kashmir Papers:British Intervention in Kashmir*, 1973, Free Thought Literature Company, Kashmir, pp. 69-70)

II
Khanqah-i-Mu'alla and the Evolution of Rituals

The *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla is the first major shrine in the Valley, though factually the first *Khanqah* in Kashmir was founded by Sultan Sadruddin. It was built in honour of his spiritual teacher, Shaikh Sharafuddin Suharwardi, alias Bulbul Shah[1], at Bulbul Lankar in Srinagar. But this *Khanqah* could not attract as many devotees as the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla of Saiyid Ali Hamadani for certain historical reasons:

First, Bulbul Shah was the spiritual preceptor (*murshid*) of Sultan Sadruddin and a small number of political elite including the Sultan's brother-in-law Rawachandra. This must be the reason for the mosque of Sultan Sadruddin and the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah, located on the right bank of the river Jehlum, being built nearer to one another. Moreover, the mosque was in close proximity to the Sultan's private apartment.[2] So in view of their location and small size, the mosque and the *Khanqah* must have remained a place of worship and meditation for Bulbul Shah himself and a small number of Muslims (especially the king and his supporters) during the earlier phase of Islam in Kashmir. For that reason it did not attract the commoners as pilgrims either from the city or the villages.

Second, although some modern writers[3] talk about the conversion of many Kashmiris at the hands of Bulbul Shah, no source is quoted to support such a view. As a matter of fact, no

earlier chronicler refers to the visit of Bulbul Shah either to the villages of Kashmir or the environs of Srinagar. It seems that Bulbul Shah had come to Kashmir without any purpose of converting the local population to Islam through his disciples.[4] This also explains why no source refers either to his missionary activity or his disciples who accompanied him to Kashmir.

Third, the popular conception of Bulbul Shah in Kashmir is that of a Sufi itinerant who came to Kashmir from Turkistan[5] and established his fame by converting the Buddhist ruler of Kashmir and his adherents to Islam. No other major event or a miracle is associated with him.

Fourth, Bulbul Shah has not been remembered in the folk songs of the Valley either. But it is interesting that a Ladakhi folk song refers to the association of a Buddhist ruler of Ladakh with the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah.[6]

Further, there is not a single ritual, holding significance in the Kashmiri Muslim society, whose origin can be traced to the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah. The fact of the matter is that the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah essentially assumed the importance of a religious place with the king's and his *murshid*'s name attributed to it in the folk remembrance. Until the advent of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani in Kashmir in 783 A. H. / 1381 A. D., the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah[7] and the mosque of Sultan Sadruddin[8] served as a place of Islamic worship for a minuscule minority of Muslims living near them. It is noteworthy that the *Khanqah* did not attract women devotees during the earlier period of Islam in Kashmir. This is evident by the fact that even now it does not have many women pilgrims unlike the later shrines of Kashmir. Though the *'urs* of Bulbul Shah is now celebrated in Srinagar by a small number of devotees, interestingly enough, the *Khatmat* and *maulud* that first originated at *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla and other shrines of Kashmir are recited fervently.

However, what set the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah apart was its philanthropic character thanks to the benevolent first Muslim ruler of Kashmir, Sadruddin. The *langar khana* (public kitchen) that was set up by him was annexed to the *Khanqah*.[9] It was through such an institution of social importance that an attempt was made to establish a meaningful contact with the lower sections of Kashmiri society. The historical importance of the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah thus lies in its being the first centre of

subtly disseminating the egalitarian teachings of Islam among the common people. This is illustrated by the fact that the name of the locality[10] where Saiyid Sharafuddin is entombed came to be popularly known as Bulbul Lankar (actually *langar*).[11]

After the death of Sultan Sadruddin in 1323 A.D.[12] and that of Saiyid Sharafuddin in 727 A.H./1326 A.D., [13] the *Khanqah* does not seem to have played a significant role in promoting the cause of Sufism or the poor. This must have been due to the political intrigues and instability[14] that did not allow any breathing place to the sultans of Kashmir to develop the *Khanqah* as a centre of their philanthropic activities. Also, Bulbul Shah did not leave behind him a group of devoted disciples or a *khalifa* who would have exerted a sobering influence on the political elite. On the other hand, the Buddhist connection with the original site of the mosque of Sultan Sadruddin seems to have remained firmly etched on the memory of Ladakhi Buddhist wayfarers. [15]

The sublime and eminent status of *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla embedded firmly in the psyche of Kashmiri Muslims is indicated by the name given to it. No other *Khanqah* enkindled such an ardour in the popular estimation as the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla during the formative stage of Islam in Kashmir. Several factors contributed to its preeminence; the most important being the sanctity attached to it for being the abode of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani.

Popularly known in Kashmir as Shah-i-Hamadan[16], the Kubrawi[17] Sufi Mir Saiyid Ali came to Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Qutubuddin (1374-89). The mistaken belief that he visited Kashmir thrice has been re-examined by some modern historians and, at least, two authoritative works on Sufism in Kashmir show that the Sufi visited Kashmir only once.[18] It is outside the domain of my research work to dilate upon the activities of Saiyid Ali Hamadani during the brief period of history, lasting less than a year in Kashmir. Nevertheless, it is important to point out the overexaggerated emphasis on his miraculous activities that so considerably impacted the Kashmiri minds. The vague notions that continue to exist among the devotees about his real historical role need to be demystified. Strangely enough, for a devotee of Shah-i-Hamadan, it does not matter that he is entombed in Kolab.[19] Prof. Shamsuddin

Ahmed' s remarks are worth quoting in this context: "It was a divine act that Saiyid Ali was not buried in Kashmir (his tomb is in Khatlan in present day Transoxiana), or he would have been worshipped as God himself."[20]

The basic fact about the preeminence of *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla is bound up integrally not only with the spiritual personality and historical role of Shah-i-Hamadan, but more importantly with the place he stayed at during his sojourn in Kashmir. It is a place of great holiness for the enthusiastic devotees of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. There is something sacred about it in the consciousness of his devotees. This is the reason for the revered Sufi's abode becoming an object of veneration. It is amazing that the rituals that first evolved at the shrine of Shah-i-Hamadan are focused on the place sanctified by him. Before we probe how such rituals originated at the shrine, it is necessary to describe briefly the history of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla is essentially a mosque where regular prayers have been offered since the day of its foundation. A temple formerly occupied the place where its edifice stands today. Sultan Qutubuddin (1373-1389 A.D.) utilized the stones of the temple to make a kind of platform. A special chamber for Saiyid Ali Hamadani was constructed on its northern corner.[21] Initially, the neo converts to Islam, led by their preceptor Saiyid Ali, offered five times prayers on this stony platform.

In 795 A. H. /1392 A. D., Saiyid Ali Hamadani' s son Mir Muhammad came to Kashmir and stopped at this place. He granted permission to Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413 A.D.) to raise walls on the flat raised structure. Thus the platform raised in the presence of Saiyid Ali Hamadani remained unaltered and an imposing superstructure was erected upon it in a new form. It was a single storey structure. [22] The construction work was completed in two years. Mir Muhammad Hamadani was of a royal descent. The mosque was constructed at his own expense. He also purchased the land adjoining both sides of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alia. He bestowed a gem of Badakshan[23] on Sultan Sikandar. In requital, the Sultan, out of the three

parganas of Shavar, Martand and Wular, donated the three villages of Wachi, Nunvani and Tral for its maintenance. The tax realized from these villages was to be appropriated for the developmental works on the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla. The income obtained also bore the expenses of its *langar*. Moreover, it was ensured that the helpers would be provided for financially for the rest of their lives. Maulana Saiyid Ali was appointed its trustee (*sajjada nishin*). [24]

The management of the affairs of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla was carried on impressively. However, some laxity seems to have crept in when Sultan Hasan Shah (1472-1484 A.D.), the great grandson of Sultan Sikandar, in 885 A. H. had to re-purchase the surrounding land. Again, in 887 A. H. / 1482 A. D., Salih, the queen of Sultan Muhammad Shah and the sister of Kaji Chak, acquired the suburbs and re-wrote the *Waqfnama*. To safeguard the rights of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla from any impediment in the future, she got it signed by the Sultan and thus attested and confirmed it officially. This *Waqfnama* was delivered to Saiyid Muhammad, the superintendent. The *Waqf* appears to have been a precautionary measure against the high handedness of the Chaks or to thwart their activities against the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla. It could also have been a revival of the old *Waqfnama* that might have lost its significance.[25]

In 1480 A.D., Allaudinpura went up in flames. The *Khanqah*-i-Mualla was also scorched. Sultan Hasan Shah requisitioned the entire area. The *Khanqah* was rebuilt keeping its earlier base intact. Qazi Hamiduddin, the father of Qazi Ibrahim penned its date in these words:

مَسجِدٌ اُسِّسَ علیٰ التقویٰ،۸۸۵ھ/۱۴۸۰ء

It comes to 885 A.H. / 1480 A.D.

In 885 A. H., the roof of the mosque caught fire. Restoration work was carried out with the support of Queen Salih.[26] Another storey was added to the *Khanqah*. The date of completion of the project is

وَمَنْ دَخلَهٗ کَانَ امِنا،۸۹۹ھ/۱۴۹۳ء

that corresponds to 899 A.H. / 1493 A.D.

In 971 A. H., Hussain Shah (1563-1570 A.D.), the Chak ruler, took possession of the *jagir* of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla. But a threatening letter from the Mughal emperor Akbar kept his intentions under restraint. [27] It is stated that Saiyid Ali, one of the descendents of erstwhile *sajjada nishin* Maulana Saiyid, met Akbar and sought the reinstatement of the *jagir*. The emperor paid heed to the cry raised in lamentation. The *jagir* was restored and Husain Chak's intent subdued.[28]

The Mughal emperor Aurangzeb ordered an investigation into the alleged embezzlement of the Waqf. He decreed, as a sequel to his enquiry, that the payments be made in cash directly from the State Exchequer. Further, he demanded a report from the governor Nawab Saif Khan on the revenue yielded from the land granted. It was found that the profit was much greater than the reimbursements. Consequently, the extent of *jagir* was reduced to one half of its original.[29]

The *Khanqah* caught fire in 1144 / 1731. The fire is dated

آتش تجلی، ۱۱۴۴ھ/۱۷۳۱ء

that is the same as 1144 A.H. /1731 A.D. It was almost re-constructed and repairs to the mosque were completed under the supervision of the deputy Mughal governor, Nawab Abul Barkat Khan.[31]

In 1146 A. H. / 1733 A. D., the mosque was badly burnt in the blaze again.[30] People tried to douse the fire but all the helpers (*khuddam*) could manage to save were the relics. The fire's date is penned in these words:

کعبۃ البرکات، ۱۱۴۶ھ/۱۷۳۳ء

In 1218 A. H / 1803 A. D., Sardar Abdullah Khan Halkozai, the Afghan governor, got the roof of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla repaired and donated a munificent sum of money for its sprucing up.

During the Afghan regime, an annual amount of Rs.2000/- was sanctioned for the conservation of this sanctuary. This practice continued till the advent of the Sikhs who stopped it altogether.[32]

During the rule of Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-85), Saiyid Yaqub Khan, the Yarqand envoy, in his endeavour to

trace his lineage to Saiyid Ali Hamadani, and to avail himself of the benefits of its *jagir*, succeeded in taking some valuable documents from the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla.[33] He produced them to the Viceroy of India and got an annual pension of Rs.12000/- conceded. Accordingly, the British Government annulled the rights on the *jagir*.

In 1302 A. H. / 1884 A. D., Nawab Ahsanullah Khan of Dacca lent an amount of Rs.1000/-, through governor Laxman Das (1884-1886 A.D.), for its flooring.

In 1324 A. H. / 1906 A. D., Mufti Abdur Rahim in association with a Kashmiri businessman, Ghulam Samdani, then residing in Peshawar, undertook the restoration work of the mosque.

Now, whenever the need, patching up and embellishment are executed on the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla from the funds received from public and the rent collected from shops and houses belonging to it.[34]

THE EVOLUTION OF RITUALS

The fundamentals of Islam are:

1. The profession of faith. A Muslim is one who proclaims (*shahada*, witness or testimony): "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad (SAW) is his messenger."
2. Prayer (*salat*) five times each day.
3. Almsgiving (*zakat*).
4. The fast of Ramadhan.
5. Hajj, the pilgrimage.

There are certain rituals that are associated with the pilgrimage to Mecca, the sacrifice on the Eid-ul-Zuha, marriage and funeral ceremonies. While most of these rituals are sanctioned in the Qur'an and *Hadith*, the ritual prayer (*namaz*-i-*jinaza*) connected with the death of a person and the observance of prayer for rain (*istisqa*) during drought is sanctioned in the *Hadith* only. It may be emphasized here that the daily prayer cannot be described merely as a ritual in view of its being the fundamental obligation prescribed for the believers in the Qur'an. It is another matter that the daily prayer is generally but erroneously designated as a ritual.

Some features are common to most religions: the recognition of a sacred realm from which supernatural forces operate, a mediating priesthood, the use of ritual to establish a right relationship with a holy (though ritual used to manipulate the supernatural becomes magic), and a sense of group community.[35]

Sacred spaces as sites for sacred performances and events are the ground on which the Kashmiris have erected the edifices of their religious life from time immemorial. According to Kalhana, Kashmir was a land of *tirtha* (a sacred place of pilgrimage). [36] In the temples of Kashmir, as elsewhere, there was always a supernatural object of awe and worship. It generally provided a system of ethics and an ethnocentric view that supplied a stable context within each person who could relate it to others and to the society and, thus, could understand his or her own significance. Some dominant features of religious life at the temple were: the recognition of a sacred realm from which supernatural forces operate, a mediating priesthood, the use of ritual to establish a right relationship with the holy.

At the advent of Islam in Kashmir, neither Hinduism nor Buddhism seems to have been the dominant religion. Syncretism formed the basis of the religious life of the Kashmiris_ the Hindus, the Buddhists and a tiny minority of Muslims. But the Brahman priests' stronghold over their followers deserves careful examination. The site of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla that is alleged to have been the abode of a Brahman priest provides a classic example of use and abuse of ritual to establish a kind of relationship with both the holy and mediating priesthood. A very curious ritual designed to propitiate both the deity and the priest illustrates how religion was used to manipulate the supernatural. This Hindu priest had actually turned religion into magic.

It was against the above background that the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla assumed primary importance in the religious lives of Kashmiris during the progressive stage of Islam in Kashmir. Saiyid Ali Hamadani need not give a long discourse on Islam to the common man.[37] During his brief stay he remained the royal guest and was able to secure the re-conversion of Sultan Qutubuddin and a small number of Muslims who used to practice a syncretic religion. By all accounts, Saiyid Ali

Hamadani had a potent influence on the neo-converts comprising the king and some nobles. Considering the silence of two main sources [38] about the so-called proselytizing activities of Saiyid Ali Hamadani in Kashmir, it is not correct to say that Kashmir was converted en mass to Islam as a result of his miraculous or sermonizing role. The perfectly plausible fact seems to be the re-conversion of such a Sultan of Kashmir to Islam who along with his Muslim supporters used to regularly attend a temple at Alauddinpura before the advent of Saiyid Ali Hamadani on the scene. The re-conversion of the Sultan to Islam along with his supporters was nothing short of remarkable. Hence in the medieval estimation it was considered to be the mass conversion of Kashmiris to Islam under the influence of Saiyid Ali.

The mind, therefore, holds an inquest into the association of Saiyid Ali with countless legends of proselytizing mission. The prevalent belief is that thousands of Kashmiris abandoned their unIslamic ways after throwing off their sacred threads and building a huge bonfire of them. There is a feeling of certainty among the ardent devotees that Saiyid Ali Hamadani potently deployed his great charisma to show the people of Kashmir the way to the *Shari'ah*.

Therefore the need is to bring the events, as contrasted with illusions, back to reality. But this is possible only when we distinguish the historical role of Saiyid Ali from that of his supposed proselytizing one so deeply lodged in the memory of the people. Nothing explains the phenomenon of conversion to Islam more objectively than the Muslim life that exists at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla in Srinagar. On a closer scrutiny, religious life seems to be confined to a particular sacred place and particular time. Yet its effervescence, to use the phraseology of Durkheim [39], is indeed more intense not only in the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla but in all other *Khanqah*s of Kashmir on particular occasions. Such occasions have been a red-letter day in the religious life of Kashmiris [40] since they are connected with the death anniversaries of the Sufis.

The historical role of Saiyid Ali is closely connected with the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla. It was here that Islam as a civilization, that is, as unified body of beliefs, ideas and values elaborated and transmitted in Kashmir through the evolution of a ritual, related to *Awrad-i-Fathhiya*.

Awrad-i-Fathhiya [41] is an invocatory prayer based on some Quranic verses, *Hadith* and prayers of the Sufis compiled by Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani. He prescribed this prayer to his disciples. But there is a strong belief among the Muslims of Kashmir that the group recital of the prayer was especially meant for them. It is further believed that it had the *batini* (recondite) sanction of the Prophet (SAW).

Considering the importance of *zikr* [42] in the Qur'an and consequently in all the Sufi orders, there is nothing novel about the prescription of the same by Saiyid Ali to his disciples in Kashmir. He had asked the disciples to read it aloud in congregation. From the Quranic viewpoint, *zikr* is permissible. However, the historical and sociological significance of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* lies in its mode of intonation. Its echoing recital continues to be practiced by the devotees even now. This historical and social fact has actually turned its recitation into some sort of a ritual that not only raised the eyebrows of Saiyid Ahmad Kirmani, a venerable Sufi, during the initial stage of spread of Islam in Kashmir but, also, in recent history has caused a good deal of concern to the modern politico-religious reformists. To revert, in the sixteenth century, when Saiyid Ahmad Kirmani found that the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* was orally repeated in a loud tone in every mosque of Srinagar, he barred the people from its resonating usage. [43] After a while, he decided to leave the city and started moving towards Baramulla. He reached Upalhakmarg, near the Buniyar hamlet, and spent the night there. After offering *fajr* prayers, he went into a meditative trance. Saiyid Ali Hamadani appeared with a piece of reed in his hand and showed signs of throwing it towards Saiyid Ahmad Kirmani. "What offence have I committed?" asked Saiyid Kirmani. "The despicable deed is that you have dissuaded people from the *wird* [44] (recitation) of the Prophet (SAW). It was by means of the recitation of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* that Islam reached out to the masses of Srinagar," replied Saiyid Ali Hamadani. On hearing this, Saiyid Kirmani, in all penitence, left the place and, walking barefoot, headed back to Srinagar. He went to every street, lane, alley and mosque. He implored and instructed the people of Srinagar to recite aloud regularly the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* after *namaz* in the mornings and the evenings. [45]

Expectably, therefore, *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* continues to be a popular form of *zikr* in all the shrines of Kashmir to this day, despite the fact that during the period of recent turmoil in Kashmir it could not be recited in several shrines and mosques due to the opposition of the politico-religious reformists. Its intonation in a reverberating manner may be regarded as the spiritual dimension of Islam (in Kashmir) and cultural legacy of the Kashmiris.

Situated in its proper historical and contemporary perspective, the extreme importance of the loud group recital of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* to the Kashmiris during periods of their religious evolution merits careful analysis. This phenomenon may be explained in terms of several factors:

a) Elitist
b) Social
c) Emotional.

Awrad-i-Fathhiya begins with a prayer seeking the forgiveness of Allah for one's sins. Allah is praised for his attributes (*siffats*) like *Hai*, *Qayyum*, and *Salam*. Hence Allah's help is also invoked for the grant of peace to the believers. The emphasis of the prayer is on the Oneness of Allah and Transcendence. Further, emphasis on the 99 attributes of Allah and the invocation of Allah through several other prayers contained in the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* clearly bring out its importance as a primary source of Islam in Kashmir. Also, the *Awrad's* stress on the fundamental Islamic belief in the finality of the Prophethood in Muhammad (*khatm-i-nabuuat*) in addition to the strong belief in the Oneness of God deserves special emphasis. This is not to deny the importance of the five pillars of Islam for the neo-converts in Kashmir during the sojourn of Saiyid Ali Hamadani to Kashmir. Given the religious as well as historical importance of *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* in the syncretic Hindu-Buddhist environment of Kashmir, the argument needs to be discussed at some length.

Awrad-i-Fathhiya was essentially a *wazifa*[46] bestowed on his royal *murid* Sultan Qutubuddin and a small number of his Muslim compatriots. The history of Islam in Kashmir cannot be understood simply on the basis of statements of general nature contained in the Persian sources. We need to capture the essence of the source material, both literary and oral through critical examination and creative imagination. So one ought to

delve deep into the history as well as religious psyche of the earlier converts to Islam in Kashmir.

Without an iota of doubt, the early converts to Islam in Kashmir were followers of a syncretistic religious ideology. At the head of the small Muslim community in Kashmir was the king who flagrantly violated the rules of the *Shari'ah*. He had kept two sisters as his wives, participated in the religious ceremonies of the Brahmans and performed even the *yagna*.[47]

A closer evaluation of the source material makes it clear that Saiyid Ali Hamadani first addressed himself to the primary task of reconverting the ruler and a small number of neo Muslims rather than the Kashmiri masses. This is corroborated by the fact that Saiyid Ali was treated as a guest of the State. During his stay in Srinagar, the Saiyid's first encounter was with a Brahman ascetic.

The earliest Persian chronicler Saiyid Ali gives us important information about Saiyid Ali Hamadani's encounter with the Brahman ascetic. Although some modern historians have utilized this source for their works, nevertheless, I deem it necessary to translate an important passage from Saiyid 'Ali's *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* for promoting an objective and better understanding of Saiyid Ali Hamadani' s role in the history of Kashmir:

"Saiyid Ali Hamadani was accorded a rousing welcome by Sultan Qutubuddin. The Sultan walked barefoot to receive him. It had come to the notice of Saiyid Ali Hamadani that a trained ascetic, at the small house for travellers, had subdued a spirit. The ascetic, by way of polytheism demanded wine, bread and roasted sheep from the people. He and others of the same ilk relished this. The people were expected to bring all this stuff on their respective turns in a fixed pattern laid down by him. They had been forewarned that in case of a delay, a person among them would be eaten up. So infidelity had become customary as people yielded to the unjust claims of the ascetic. This was the reason why Saiyid Ali Hamadani along with his companions decided to stay in Alauddinpura, at the same place where the ascetic was stationed. In fact, the ascetic had an inkling that his depraved ways and the false beliefs he so craftily had nurtured among the people will not last long. Keeping his interests in mind he went to Saiyid Ali Hamadani to contest his powers. He claimed that he sojourned the world of angels and

could bring the dead to life and vice versa. 'Is there any one who can compete with my esoteric knowledge?' he boasted. However, the ascetic, by means of this knowledge, had foreseen the arrival of Saiyid Ali Hamadani and ruin of the idol-temple. His prophecy turned out to be true. When he met Saiyid Ali, the latter said: 'Exhibit your powers so that I may destroy your idol-temple.' Saiyid Ali ordered that the idols be broken. There were approximately 120 idols and when the largest one was smashed into four pieces, a piece of birch leaf fell out of it. On opening, the *kalima* was found written on it. The ascetic stood there benumbed. Being cut down to his size in such a manner was too much for him to savour. He realized that his faith was unfounded and canons bogus and meaningless. In spite of all this, he was bent upon debate in his usual conceited manner. Saiyid Ali Hamadani asked him to transport himself upwards so that he could assess how much power the ascetic possessed. At once the ascetic started flying and went out of sight. Saiyid Ali Hamadani signaled Muhammad Kabir Baihaqi, who taking a cue threw his clog into the air. This clog also flew and went after the ascetic. No sooner did it reach the spot where the ascetic was flying than it started striking the ascetic on his head and in this manner brought him down. Shortly thereafter the ascetic embraced Islam and his folk followed suit. On that eventful day nearly four thousand men and women of all ages shed their polytheistic shackles and embraced Islam. The ascetic was handed over to Baihaqi for receiving proper guidance. The idol-temple was reduced to ruins on the instructions of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. It is said that at the time of founding the city, Raja Praversen had constructed this idol-temple. Hindus thronged it everyday. Sultan Qutubuddin, though a Muslim, also frequented it daily. The Sultan made a porch for shade and shelter and Saiyid Ali Hamadani's tent was securely pegged there. The spirit whose name was Sahareo and had formerly been under the control of the ascetic, presented himself before Saiyid Ali Hamadani in a human form. He too became a Muslim and took Shah Muhammad as his new name. The idol-temple was brought down. It had hitherto been called the house for travelers (inn), but after dismantling, was named the *Khanqah-i-Mu'alla*. Sultan Qutubuddin met Saiyid Ali Hamadani and humbly entreated (him) that he would fix a stipend to meet the

expenses of his associates. At that moment Saiyid Ali Hamadani's eyes fell on the way the Sultan had worn his clothes. He noticed that Qutubuddin had tied his clothes on the left side; in the same manner the infidels tied theirs. At Saiyid Ali Hamadani's bidding, Qutubuddin tied his clothes on the right. He modestly invited Saiyid Ali Hamadani to his home. The Sufi along with his retinues, comprising seven hundred people, went there and started examining the state of affairs. On careful inspection, they found that Qutubuddin had married two sisters. Since this type of a marriage is forbidden in Islam, the Sultan divorced both his wives on the suggestion of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. The elder one, under the able guidance and care of Saiyid Ali Hamadani, chose seclusion and went on to become what chronicler Saiyid Ali calls the *'arifa* (skilled in divine matters)' of her age. The Sultan's *nikah* with the younger sister, the mother of Sikandar, was renewed. As Islam had not been completely manifested, the Sultan was a 'hereditary' Muslim only. Moreover, the ministers of the State were polytheists and the Sultan submitted (himself) to their ways lest they revolt. Further, the ministers were not fully acquainted with the precepts of Islam. Even if there were three or four mosques in the city, neither the *azaan* had been read nor the prayers offered in congregation. Now for the first time the *azaan* was read and prayers offered in congregation in the same porch that had been constructed on the inn. The people now started conforming themselves to the *Sunnah* and became disciples of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. Pir Haji Muhammad, on the command of Saiyid Ali, was asked to teach every young and old member of Sultan Qutubuddin' s family the Qur'an and the correct way of offering *namaz* and observing fast. The Sultan walked all the way, and presented himself before Saiyid Ali, to offer five prayers at the times ordained respectively. Qazi Ibrahim bin Qazi Hamiddudin in his work writes that Saiyid Ali Hamadani dwelt temporarily in Kashmir for eighty days, and six months according to other chroniclers. At last, the climate of Kashmir could not suit him any longer. The companions, contemplating performing the Hajj, too, started leaving the place. Saiyid Ali Hamadani granted permission to some learned men to stay back.[48] Sultan Qutubuddin took the responsibility of their settlement." [49]

The main source of Saiyid Ali, the author of *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, is the *Tarikh* of Qazi Ibrahim bin Qasim Hamiddudin who held the post of *qazi* during the reign of Mirza Haidar Dughlat (1540-1550 A.D.). Another source seems to have been the folk tradition or memory. It can, therefore, be safely assumed that he did not have any contemporary source to rely upon regarding Saiyid Ali Hamadani' s encounter with the Brahman ascetic. But when we read his details concerning the event in conjunction with a near contemporary source quoted above, authenticity of certain historical facts as well as their glorification over a period of time, roughly about two centuries, becomes crystal clear. The historical fact is the occurrence of the event connected with the Brahman ascetic who embraced Islam at the hands of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. Our earliest source on Saiyid Ali Hamadani's encounter with the Brahman ascetic is Haidar Badakshi. Being a near contemporary of the great Sufi, he can be more relied upon than the chronicler Saiyid Ali. Haidar Badakshi does not confound the objective truth with untruth. In fact, he does not say anything except the fact that Saiyid Ali Hamadani converted the Brahman ascetic. His account clearly suggests that the ascetic was not a superhuman, notwithstanding the term *dev* used by the chronicler for him. What is important is that the chronicler talks about the magical powers of the *dev*. It can, therefore, be safely inferred that the *dev* under reference was none other than a magician who had enchanted the gullible commoners. Also, it was through *istidraj* [50] that he seems to have cast a spell over the Sultan and his Muslim subjects. No wonder that in a particular socio-religious context of Kashmir, Lal Ded was very critical of the magical powers of the priests in the guise of ascetics:

"To stop a flowing stream, to cool a raging fire,
To walk on one s feet in the sky,
To labour at milking a wooden cow -
All these, in the end, are but base jugglery." [51]

A modern historian rightly observes that Islam in Kashmir cannot be described as a matter of miraculous feat achieved by Saiyid Ali Hamadani.[52] However what merits attention is the impact of Saiyid Ali Hamadani' s encounter with the Brahman

ascetic that prompted spinning of numberless tales around it in the later period.[53] The chronicler Saiyid Ali makes a significant statement regarding the acceptance of Islam by about four thousand people at the hands of Saiyid Ali Hamadani in the context of *shirk* (polytheism) and *zunar* (the sacred Brahmanical thread). His obvious reference is to the neo Muslims who practiced polytheism, continued to wear the holy thread and regularly frequented the temple in the company of Sultan Qutubuddin. It can be inferred that besides the neo Muslims, a good number of non-Muslims must have also embraced Islam under the influence of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. Hence the re-conversion of the neo Muslims and the conversion of non-Muslims comprising about four thousand people were understood as the conversion of the entire population of Kashmir by the chronicler Saiyid Ali during the later days. And when Haidar Badakshi says that Saiyid Ali Hamadani brought Islam to Kashmir, his statement has the context of the Srinagar city against his encounter with the Brahman ascetic rather than Kashmir as a whole.

The chronicler Saiyid Ali points to the existence of two or three mosques in Srinagar before the arrival of Saiyid Ali Hamadani on the scene. From his account, however, it is clear that they were used by a few individuals and had ceased to be the places of congregational importance. For that matter, it is certain that even the *khanqah* of Bulbul Shah and the mosque of Sultan Sadruddin may have been used by some individual souls rather than a Muslim community characterized by any religious and social consciousness.

Seen from the above perspective, the emergence of the *Khanqah*-I-Mu'alla as an unexampled centre of spiritual and social importance during the developmental stage of Islam in Kashmir can be imagined as well as described. Initially the *Khanqah* had undoubtedly an *elitist* character considering the attendance of Sultan Qutubuddin at the appointed time of prayers. Also, the intonation of *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* was confined to Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani, his disciples (*sadaat*), the sultan, some members of the royal family and a few Muslim subjects. In no case were the early religious assemblages at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla a public affair. However, with the reconstruction of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla during the reign of Sikandar, the resounding recital of *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* by the

passionate devotees seems to have attracted a considerable number of people to the fold of Islam. This is clearly reflected in these words of the conservative Brahman chronicler Srivara:

> It was here that the *yavanas* (Muslims) chanted *mantras* (hymns) and looked graceful like thousand lotuses with humming bees.[54]

Apart from its importance as *zikr*, the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya*'s varied social and historical dimensions need elucidation. In the first place, the reading aloud of *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* originated as a particular form of an established religious practice in the *Khanqah*. The behaviour patterns of the devotees during its recital are reminiscent of the typical mores of Kashmir. This pattern pertains to individual as well as collective consciousness. It is not difficult to imagine how this pattern evolved over the centuries, though initially the recitation of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* during the brief stay of Saiyid Ali Hamadani must have been a simple but loud chanting of verses without any local bearing. During the time of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani or even Saiyid Muhammad Hamadani in Srinagar, the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* must have been simply recited as a *zikr* by the Kubrawi Saiyids. But with gradual conversion of the local population to Islam, the innate mode of social behaviour began to soar so much so that the manner in which the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* is vocally echoed in all major shrines and numerous mosques of Kashmir, points to its recitation as a distinctive feature of Islam in Kashmir.

DEVOTIONAL ARDOUR AT THE SHRINE

The interior of the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla is composed of a single large hall. The devotees come to the shrine to offer prayers at regular intervals in this hall in accordance with the injunctions of the Qur'an and the *Hadith*. However, there is a certain chamber situated in the northwest corner of the mosque that has been a place of veneration since early times. R. C. Kak wrongly describes it 'as the tomb of the saint.'[55] As a matter of fact, writes M. Ishaq Khan, "the right corner in the direction of the *qibla* has been preserved as the sacred enclosure since the adjacent lies the chamber, the one time abode of the Saiyid.

Since the saint is believed to have sanctified the place during his sojourn in Srinagar, the enclosure has become the object of veneration. What is of critical importance is the focus of the devotees on the abode of the saint during recitation of the *Awrad*. Prostration by individual devotees in the direction of the sacred enclosure is a common sight." [56]

The veneration shown by the men in the mosque itself towards the one-time abode of Saiyid Ali Hamadani raises suggestive questions of religious, historical and socio-cultural nature. According to the Qur'an, "And the places of worship are only for Allah, so pray not unto anyone along with Allah." [57] So from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, reverence shown by the devotees towards the sacred place of Saiyid Ali Hamadani in the divinely recognized place, the mosque, itself is bound to raise one's eyebrows. Although women are not allowed to enter the mosque, they exhibit their reverence towards the place sanctified by the Sufi in several forms. While doing field survey, I found some women standing at the entrance door of the mosque with folded hands in the direction of the object of veneration. Not a few of them were either sitting or standing in the north west corner of the shrine, the place allotted to women for offering congregational prayers.

Another empirical fact is that after the performance of congregational prayers, the women face the place of veneration from the west and enter into communion with the spirit of the Sufi that is supposed to be there always. During the course of men and women's focus on the abode of the Sufi, various forms of *zikr* are recited. While the recitation of the *Awrad-i-Fathhlya* is common to all, other kinds of *zikr* relate to the Qur'an, the *Hadith* or in several cases invocation of the spirit of the Sufi in the Kashmiri language like *ya Agha* [58], *ya Amir* [59] and so on.

Furthermore, the atmosphere of the *Khanqah* offers a fascinating glimpse of pilgrims charged with emotional fervour. Tears well up in their eyes and the devotees cry loudly. While some intone the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* in the direction of the *qiblah* [60], a good number of devotees focus their attention on the northwest corner of the shrine. This mode of behavior, beyond doubt, originated in the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla and was later adopted at several other shrines of the Kashmir Valley. The only difference being that while at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla, during the course of recitation of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya*, the devotees focus

their attention on the place sanctified by Saiyid Ali Hamadani, in the other shrines, their focus is on the tomb of the Sufi. In the *dargah* of Hazratbal and the shrines of Dastagir Sahib in Khanyar and Sarai Bala, the focus is on the particular place where the relics of the Prophet (SAW) and Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani are preserved respectively.

It is not the purpose of my study to evaluate questions of theological nature related to the so-called shrine or relic worship. Yet, from the perspective of social history, I cannot ignore certain issues that have been vital to the development of Kashmiri Muslim society over the ages. When I questioned various men and women about the dichotomy of their behaviour in worshipping Allah and simultaneously indulging in acts that are contrary to the *Shari'ah*, the response was revealing in certain respects. Although Prof. Shamsuddin Ahmad's statement quoted before is not without any reason, it would not be correct to attach any over-exaggerated importance to it in the Orientalist manner. The empirical fact is that the devotees firmly believe that they adore none other than Allah wherever they are. But they contend that as a founder of Islam in Kashmir (*Ban*-i-*Islam*), Saiyid Ali Hamadani deserves respect that is due to him. For them Saiyid Ali Hamadani, popularly remembered as Shah-i-Hamadan and Amir-i-Kabir, is the main link between Islam and Kashmir.

From a theological standpoint, the devotees' veneration of Saiyid Ali Hamadani may seem to be a violation of the *Shari'ah*. But when this question is examined from the anthropological angle, life and rituals observed at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla testify to the orderly evolution of the Kashmiri Muslim society. This is evident from our close study of the daily life at the *Khanqah*. Here I have endeavoured to give a description of the daily life at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla in order to show the validity of my argument.

The day of the devotees at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla begins before dawn when the *muezzin* calls the faithful to the morning prayers. After the performance of the prescribed prayers, the devotees enumerate aloud the verses contained in the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya*. This practice has continued at the *Khanqah* unabated from the day of its inception. Even during the period of turmoil in the Valley, the invocatory prayer continued to be read orally with great devotional spirit by the people in spite of the

objections raised by certain militant organizations. Realizing that in various mosques of Kashmir, the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* had ceased to be recited for such reasons as well as on account of curfew or personal safety, some individuals responded to the challenge by educating the public through local press. Thus for several days appeals were made by one maulvi in the daily *Srinagar Times* and the *Aftab* to the Kashmiris impressing upon them the need for reciting the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* daily for spiritual and worldly benefits.[61] Remarkably, the maulvi highlighted the importance of reciting the Aurad collectively at the time of crisis the Valley was going through in the early 1990s. It is significant to note that this practice continues to be in vogue in a number of mosques and every shrine of the Kashmir Valley.

From the above it can be inferred that the ritual of reading the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* with a peculiar voice modulation after the daily morning prayers is integral to the spiritual and historical awareness of the Kashmiris as a whole. This is genuinely proven by the noticeable fact that the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla alone does not reverberate to the group chanting of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* but this constant devotional act is exhibited by the Kashmiri Muslims in the Suharwardi, Naqshbandi, Qadiri, and Rishi shrines of the Valley as well. The Kashmiri Muslims are distinguished by the singularity of their loud and collective remembrance of Allah, the Prophet (SAW), the Companions, *Ahl*-i-*Bait*, *Taabaeen*, *Taaba Taabaeen*, and the protégés of Allah, which has nothing in common with that of the other Muslim societies of the Indian subcontinent. This distinctiveness substantiates my earlier argument regarding the orderly evolution of Kashmiri Muslim society during long periods of Islamic acculturation. [62] Hence the collective intonation of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* in the mosques and shrines of Kashmir represents two historical realities in objective terms. While one reality relates to the historical role of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani in giving a belief structure to the Kashmiris in the form of the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya*, [63] the other is the gradual response of the Kashmiris to it at the societal level through a process of spiritual and social evolution over centuries past.

SUPPLICANTS FOR BLESSINGS

SUPPLICANTS FOR BLESSINGS

Yet another important aspect of the daily life at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla is the visit of several men and women. This group belongs to a different category composed mainly of women. They come to the shrine mainly with the object of seeking blessings of the spirit of Saiyid Ali Hamadani for the fulfillment of their worldly wishes. There is no doubt that this category of pilgrims knows very little about Islam. Thus ostensibly they are wedded more to the shrine than the fundamentals of Islam. A majority makes direct appeals to the spirit of this Sufi, despite their belief in the Oneness of Allah. Such gullible devotees get easily entrapped by the custodians (*mujawir*) of the shrine who fleece them on one pretext or the other. These pilgrims kneel in supplication and kiss the walls, windows, doors etc. of the *Khanqah*. Some of them tie strips of cloth in knots to the grilled walls and at certain other places. For these devotees, these strings act like some sort of reminders, one to the Sufi, of the devotees' supplication for help, and the other to themselves, of their pledge to bring a befitting offering or feed and clothe a needy person as soon as the wishes have been realized. Their implorations and laments prompted me to ask them several questions. It was revealed that a majority of them flock to the shrine for the fulfillment of their worldly desires. Elderly people sought the blessings of the Sufi and pray for a decent job for their wards, or if unmarried, a suitable match etc. Young childless couples prayed for a child of their own. Some pilgrims sought the alleviation of diseases whose cure is yet to be found in medical sciences. I saw a patient with malignant tumour sitting in the shrine compound. Still others besought a favourable verdict in court cases they had been involved in. The peasants prayed for bountiful crops. The list is endless. Those pilgrims whose prayer had been answered by Allah through the spiritual intervention of the Sufi were making offerings or giving alms to the poor. These fervent devotees reach out to the Sufi in times good or bad. What if some of the requests are not entertained, the comforting thought is that Saiyid Ali Hamadani has put their loyalty to test. These people assure themselves of the Sufi's perpetual love and care by recalling those moments of the past when he had taken them out of their ordeal. But exceptions being a rule as elsewhere, here too, I found a few people thronging the shrine

solely for gaining spiritual insights. Their quest for truth and soul searching is unending.

There is hardly a day when women are not seen sweeping around the *Khanqah*. Though done out of reverence, the practice has always ensured a clean environment in the premises of the *Khanqah*.

An important feature of the life at the *Khanqah* is the spirit of equality among the devotees. The devotees irrespective of their economic status bring food, particularly *tahar* and *qahwa*, to the shrine daily. It is not a rarity to watch the beggars, the poor and the rich men and women share the same food.

THE *'URS* CELEBRATIONS

The *Khanqah* witnesses extravagant and colourful celebrations on the eve of *'urs*. The *'urs* of Saiyid Ali Hamadani is celebrated on 6 Zil Hajj. A wide publicity is given in the local press by the Waqf Board in order to ensure greater participation of the devotees in the ritual assemblies organized at the *Khanqah*. The devotees come from different parts of Srinagar. A few Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs visit the shrine and participate in *'urs* celebrations. The day of *'urs* being a holiday is an added advantage.

The detailed prescribed programme published in the local dailies shows that the rituals at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla have assumed an institutional character. Though the ordained five times prayers figure prominently in the publicized programme, what catches one's attention are the variety of rituals associated with such religious assemblages. A special *khatam* is organized in the memory of Saiyid Ali Hamadani between *fajr* and *zuhr* prayers.

The social background of the participants in the *Khatmat* recited at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla on eve of the *'urs* is varied. One may notice the conspicuous presence of the Muslim traditional elite of Srinagar. Another category of the participants is that of the traders and artisans belonging to the traditional part of the city. The artisans, particularly belonging to the shawl and carpet industry, cherish the firm belief that Saiyid Ali Hamadani introduced their crafts in the Valley. Hence their links with his shrine are not only of religious nature but also of socio-

historical importance. For this reason the modern religious reform movements like the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and the Jamaat-i-Islami have not been able to win over the community of artisans to their ideologies.

THE *'URS* SCHEDULE

To mark the occasion of annual *'urs* at the shrine of Shah-i-Hamadan, the sanctified days' celebrations start a few days earlier and last till the day of *'urs* falling on the 6th of Zil Hajj. In this respect, a timetable of events to be observed is prepared by the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Waqf Board. It is circulated through the local press for the information of all the devoted admirers of Amir-i-Kabir Saiyid Ali Hamadani. The detailed programme on the annual *'urs* celebrations maked mention of the ordained prayers' timings in addition to the religious assemblages proposed to be held in the forenoon and particularly the night preceding *'urs*.

To honour the solemn *'urs* ceremony, religious gatherings are held immediately after the offering of the prescribed *fajr* prayer in congregation. *Khatmat* dedicated to Amir-i-Kabir, *durud*, *n'at* and *manqabat* are recited. The assembly concludes before noon.

5TH ZIL HAJJ

It is the day when *shab*-i-*awwal* or the first night of recitals is organized. People start assembling at the Khanqah after the *'asr* prayer. The place sees throngs of people especially at the time of offering the *'iṣha* prayer. Once the prayer is complete, night long hallowed intonations commence. The names and attributes of Allah are recollected, *durud* and some selected verses of the Quran are read, benedictions are pronounced, *n'at* and *manqabat* are intoned.

The recitals continue till the time of the *fajr* prayer on the day of *'urs* is offered.

6TH ZIL HAJJ

The 6th of Zil Hajj is the day of *'urs* and sees scores of devotees from all parts of the Valley occupying every nook and

cranny of the Khanqah-i-Mualla. The day is a holiday gazetted for the Kashmir province and enthusiasm among the devotees eager to pay homage is palpable. On this day, as usual, five prayers are offered at the hours prescribed in congregation. People are apprised of the timings in advance. One of the major highlights of this day is the sermon delivered by Mirwaiz Kashmir prior to the offering of the *zuhr* prayer.[64]

The day of *'urs* is solemnized with traditional ardour not only at the Khanqah-i-Mualla but also in other shrines at places like Tral, Sopore etc.

The Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board makes plans for the effective organization of *'urs* celebrations at the Khanqah-i-Mualla precincts. It makes proper arrangements for first aid; clean drinking water etc. keeping in mind the interests of pilgrims at large. Moreover, the Waqf sees to it that the pilgrims have easy access to prayer mats. Furthermore, the Departments of Electricity, Water Works, the Srinagar Municipality, the Traffic Police are requested extend cooperation in making the solemn event a great success.

THE MANAGING COMMITTEE

The managing committee of the Auqaf-i-*Khanqah*-i-Mualla was constituted in the late 1920s. The well-regulated Auqaf is an appendage of the Waqf Board. The management is organized. It includes officials of different ranks who work in an orderly manner_ *imam* (preacher), *khuddam* (caretakers), *muezzin* (who calls the Muslims to prayer), *khazanchi* (cash-keeper), *farash* (cleaner who spreads carpets, lights lamps etc.), *tehwildar* (store-keeper) etc. Besides, the president and several helpers nominate thirty members from all walks of life, though usually well connected.

The Auqaf has dispensed good service in the past and continues doing so. For instance, between 1943 and 1944 A.D., the managing committee built anew the earlier dilapidated upper minaret and replaced the old roofs with galvanized tin sheets. The outer mud walls of the mosque, surrounding platforms, roads and adjoining cemetery were rebuilt using concrete blocks of *devri* stones.[65] Funds amounting to over a lac rupees collected from the devotees were disbursed. Towards

the west, two large parks near the bank of the river Jehlum were arranged.

Several buildings have been constructed since then. Their rooms have been rented and revenue yielded is expended on renovating the *Khanqah*.

The *Khanqah* has a small library of old books.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AT THE *KHANQAH* PRECINCT

The *Khanqah*-i-Mualla resonates with historical significance. Its distinct entity is all encompassing and besides society, culture, art, and tradition, it involves politics too.

The *Khanqah* precinct was the hub of political activities[66] way back in the twentieth century. [67] It was here in the 1920s that the Muslims of Kashmir agitated against the high-handedness of the Maharaja's government. Once Maharaja Pratap Singh accompanied by Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India sailed up the river Jehlum. "Justice", roared a mammoth gathering of people holding black flags. Later, the Mirwaiz of the *Khanqah*-i-Mualla and the Jama Masjid accompanied by some eminent *jagir*dars signed a memorial and submitted it to the Viceroy. They made a statement about the unfair treatment meted out to the Muslims of Kashmir. [68]

On 21st June 1931, a public meeting was held at the premises of the *Khanqah*.[69] After its conclusion; Maulvi Abdul Qadeer[70] delivered a fiery speech. Later, he was charged with sedition.

In 1930s, the Valley of Kashmir witnessed political upheavals. Strong emotions were vented in the form of mass gatherings.[71] Masses were resentful of discriminatory policy of the government. They gave vent to their anger by holding demonstrations to protest against the government indifference. A delegation representing the Muslims of Kashmir was chosen at the *Khanqah* compound. An eloquent reminder of the sufferings was given to Maharaja Hari Singh. [72]

In the year 1933-34, the Working Committee of the All Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference started a movement for responsible government under the astute leadership of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah. Countless people held protest marches and rallied against the government apathy. Yet again, people convened at the premises of the *Khanqah*.

A huge bell hung from the upper storey of the *Khanqah*. Whenever it was rung, people would gather in the courtyard. Such was its impact that governor Sardar Attar Singh summoned the attendants (*khuddam*) and asked them to discourage the people from the practice. But they refused to oblige.[73]

On one occasion when people, at the end of a public rally, were leaving the premises of the *Khanqah*, some miscreants pelted police with stones. In retaliation, they entered the holy premises and started firing into the crowd.[74]

Then in 1947, [75] Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah, after his release, addressed a mammoth gathering at the *Khanqah* complex. He delivered a rousing speech full of hope. At that moment of truth, he gave a clarion call to the youth of Kashmir to come forward and defend the State. But foremost was his appeal to maintain communal harmony.

In remembrance of the martyrs and sufferers of the mass movement of Jammu And Kashmir State a big platform has been raised in the central compound of the *Khanqah*.[76]

THE *KHANQAH*-i-MU'ALLA: AN AESTHETIC SPACE

The Shah-i-Hamadan mosque is situated on the right bank of the river Jehlum, just below the Fateh Kadal, or the third bridge. The chief building material used in its construction is the wood of the deodar pine. [77] It is equipped with a pyramidlike tall tower made of timber capped with spire, the prototype of every mosque in Kashmir.

The *Khanqah's* plinth is made of huge iron bars stuffed with budshahi bricks.

Its enclosure is 63 x 43. It has 14 cells on the right and the left side.[78] The pyramidal roof projecting over the whole structure is built in three tiers, and is surmounted by an open pavilion for the *muezzin*, over which rises the steeple with its finial 125ft above the ground.

The *Khanqah's* ornate interior is a veritable treasure trove of woodcarving, calligraphic art and glasswork.

Its wooden doors and windows exhibit matchless craftsmanship, especially the cornice above the frame.

The four columns that support the ceiling are covered with pieces of wood arranged in fish-bone pattern. The base of

this wooden covering is bedecked with carved lotus motif. Showkat-il-Yahud, a kind of flower, is carved on the capital.[79]

The dadoes inside the grand threshold are made of wooden planks. They are decked with carved flowery patterns.

Wonderful specimens of calligraphic art lend charm to the walls of the *Khanqah*. In 1733 A.H. / 1146 A.D., Hazar Khan, the Afghan governor, got embossed some verses of the Qur'an, the *Awrad-i-Fathhiya* and the *Kibriyat-i-Ahmar* for the adornment of its walls. [80] The task was accomplished by Momin Muiz, a famous calligraphist, with a fine touch of his dexterous fingers.

A variety of calligraphic styles like *khat-i-gulzar* [81], *m'akus* [82] and *rehan* [83] in different hues on the arches impart a classy feeling.

The *Awrad-i-Fathiya* [84] and some verses of the Qur'an have been inscribed in *khat-i-naskh*. [85]

A strong contrast with the sombre hue [86] of the walls is furnished by the glass and glazed work.

The ceiling is embellished with twenty-one chandeliers. [87]

Two staircases at extreme ends lead to the upper storey.

786 is embossed on the façade. Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim [88] according to *abjad* [89] is 786. It also coincides with the year of Saiyid Ali Hamadani's departure from this life.

My empirical study in conjunction with the study of literary sources points to many facets and dimensions of the history of Islam in Kashmir. The strong Sufi tradition of venerating the Sufi continues to be preserved at the Khanqah-i-Mu'alla. This can be seen not only in the daily life and rituals evolved at the shrine, but also the architectural style of the shrine. Separate chambers provided for men and women in the Khanqah premises from very early times show the dissemination of the teachings of the Kubrawi order in an organized manner by the Kubrawi Sufis. More importantly, the efforts that have been put from time to time into the rebuilding of the shrine, its exquisite craftsmanship and timely renovation are evidence enough of the devotees' love for the Sufi who sanctified the place with just one visit of his. My researches in the Khanqah provided me a lot of chances for new discoveries. My eyes were particularly set towards beautiful art of calligraphers, wood carvers and other artists in unison. The

shrine like other shrines of the Valley is a sort of aesthic space besides being a sacred space. Noteworthily, several old buildings in the traditional part of Srinagar are marked by a style of architecture bearing the impact of the exquisite wood-carving of the Khanqah-i-Mu'alla.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Though popular among the people by the name of Bulbul Shah, Shaikh Sharafuddin is also called Saiyid Abdur Rahman Shah.

2. Sultan Sadruddin had constructed his palace towards the western direction of this mosque.

3. Mufti Muhammad Shah Saadat, *Bulbul Shah Saheb* (in Urdu), 1941, Lahore.
   Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 1974 (2nd edition), Srinagar: Ali Mohammad & Sons, p.235.
   G. M. D. Sufi, *Kashir: Being a History of Kashmir_ from the earliest times to our own*, 1, 1996 (reprint), New Delhi: Capital Publishing House, p.83.

4. Bulbul Shah did not find the Sultan, the Sultan found him.

5. Hailing from Turkistan, Bulbul Shah proceeded to Kashmir and reached the Valley during the reign of Lohara King Suhadeva (1301-1320 A.D.). This Suharwardi Sufi was a disciple of Shah Niamatullah Farsi.

6. The Ladakhi 'Song of the Bodro Masjid' speaks of the great Sufi Bulbul Shah as king's friend. *Bodro* means Tibetan. A. H. Francke, *Antiquities of Indian Tibet: personal narrative*, vol. 1, 1992 (reprint edition), New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, pp. 108, 109.

7. In the northern part of Srinagar, as we walk from Aali Kadal towards a little west, on the right bank of the river Jehlum, lies the *Khanqah-i-Bulbul Shah* in the ward of Bulbul Lankar. Soon after embracing Islam, Sultan Sadruddin got this *Khanqah* constructed. However, the original *Khanqah* was rebuilt after it had been destroyed by fire (1604 A.D.). This wooden *Khanqah* existed in a dilapidated condition till 1872 A.D. Trees were found growing through the roof of the ruined building. Quarter Master General in India in the Intelligence Branch (compiler), *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, 1992 (reprint edition), Delhi: Manas Publications, p. 780). In 1885 A.D., the *Khanqah* and its premises were brought under the purview of the State Archaeological Department. A little later it was carefully restored.

The *Khanqah*-i-Bulbul Shah is a single storey structure made of wooden blocks. Its roof has four layers and the level of each rises one above another. Turrets have been raised on four corners. In its centre are two cupolas. Of the two, the one on the right is slightly higher.

At the present time, Bubul Shah Trust has been formed to rebuild the shrine on the traditional Tsrar-i-Sharif pattern. The Intizamia Committee has taken up reconstruction work to mend cracks the building developed over the past years. In addition, adjacent houses will be acquired for the plan is to widen the roads leading to the shrine. Provisions for parking will be made to avoid any sort of inconvenience to the visitors. (This is being done in connection with the 700th *'urs* celebration commencing after a few years). The foundation stone was laid in a ceremony attended by many people. On the occasion, *durud* and *maulud-i-sharif* were recited and *fatiha* offered. Later, sweets (*shirni*) and almonds were distributed among those present.

8. On the right bank of the river Jehlum at Aali Kadal (near the present shrine of Wusi Saheb), Sultan Sadruddin got the first mosque constructed in the ward named Malchimar. As already mentioned, his private chamber stood on its west.

The mosque was a congregational one. The confines of its premises stretched up to Bodhgir. However, after some time the mosque was scorched by fire. Consequently, it underwent restructuring and a small stony structure was raised in its place. Its style of construction resembles that of the typical old houses dotted over the downtown Srinagar.

The mosque is presently in the charge of the State Archaeological Department.

9. The hospice was generously endowed to keep its *langar* going. Revenue yielded from some of the villages of Nagum pargana was granted for the purpose.

10. Formerly called Dedmar, the locality was given the name Bulbul Lankar.

11. *Langar* is the word for temporary home for travelers in Turkish.

12. Sultan Sadruddin was interred in the precincts of the *Khanqah*-i-Bulbul Shah.

13. Saiyid Sharafuddin preferred to stay in Kashmir till his last breath. He departed this life during the rule of King Udayanadeva (1323-1328), the brother of Suhadeva. He was laid to rest next to the Sultan. It has been wrongly recorded in the *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh* that the first mosque Bulbul Lankar was erected to 'contain the *ashes* (italics mine) of a fakir named Bulbul Shah' (Quarter Master General, op. cit., p.781).

14. It was a period of great turmoil in Kashmir. Though invader Zulju's attempt to plunder had been thwarted by the inspiring Queen Kota Rani and the local chiefs, people of the Valley were still reeling in shock from the chaotic event.

15. The mosque built by Sultan Sadruddin seems to have retained its Buddhist character in the folk consciousness of Buddhist travelers from Ladakh. The Ladakhis and the Kashmiris call this mosque Bodro Masjid and Rainten Masheed respectively. According to Ladakhi traditions, a Buddhist temple occupied the original site of the mosque. The pictures of Buddhist saints beneath the whitewash evidence this (*Indian Antiquary*, July 1908, p.192). A stone was found on the western wall of this mosque. It bore a peculiar inscription in the Nagri character, probably Buddhist (Quarter Master General, op. cit., p.781). No wonder the Buddhists of Ladakh continued visiting the site as pilgrims long after the construction of a mosque.

    Also see R. K. Parmu, *A History of Muslim rule in Kashmir*: *1320-1819*, 1969, People's Publishing House, p. 80, f.n. 34.

16. Shah-i-Hamadan or the monarch of Hamadan was born on 12 Rajab 714 A.H. / 22 October 1314 A.D. His family traced its lineage to Hazrat Ali, the fourth *Khalifa*. His tutors included Alaud-Daula, his maternal uncle, Shaikh Muzdaqani and Taqiuddin Ali. (Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir: from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century*, n. d., Bhartiya Publishing House, pp. 31, 32).

17. Ahmad bin Umarul Khiwaqi is the founder of the Kubrawi order. A native of Khwarazm (b. 540/1154), he is popularly known as Najmuddin Kubra. He made Khwarazm the pivot of his pursuit on the advice of his preceptor, Shaikh Ammar Yasir.

    The Kubrawi order was strikingly popular in Kashmir. Saiyid Ali Hamadani introduced this order in Kashmir. His linkages with this order are through Raziuddin Ali Lala, one of the disciples of Najmuddin Kubra (A. Q. Rafiqi, op. cit., p. 29).

    Najibuddin Muhammad (d. Delhi c. A.D. 1300) introduced the order into India (Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi orders in Islam,* 1971, Oxford, p.56).

18. Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, op. cit., p.36.
    M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam: the role of Muslim Rishis*, 2002 (paperback edition), New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 64, 65.

19. This famed Sufi breathed his last on 6 Zul-Hijja 786 A.H. / 19 January 1385 A.H. at about 72 years of age. His last resting place was at Qolab near Khuttalan in Tajikistan. Tajikistan is an independent country in Central Asia, bordering China, Afghanistan, Kirghistan and Uzbekistan.

20. This statement quoted by Bruce B. Lawrence is based on his conversation with Prof. Shamsuddin he had in Salar Jung Library Hyderabad on 15 January 1976. As Lawrence observes: the learned professor was stating not merely his personal view but a belief widely held among Kashmiris. Bruce Lawrence, "An overview of Sufi Literature in the Sultanate Period, 1206-1526 A.D.", *Khuda Baksh Library Journal* no.3, p.56, f.n. 93.

21. It was in the *hujra-i-khas* (principle chamber) that the Sufi offered prayers, received divine guidance and spent hours in silent contemplation. Just outside is a huge cupboard.

22. Whenever Mir Muhammad Hamadani found a mosque, rooms would be attached to it for the purpose of devotional meditation and the performance of prayers. In those times there were no separate arrangements of boarding and lodging for the companions of the Sufi. So these adjacent rooms served this purpose too. Such small rooms can be seen even now in their pristine condition in the *Khanqah* of Tral built by Mir Muhammad Hamadani. Later, when the rooms fell considerably short of space, extensions were built to the mosque (*Khanqah*-i-Mualla).

23. Badakshan is situated near one of the sources of the Oxus. It is famous for its rubies.

24. See Appendix E.

25. The land might have been usurped or encroached.
G. M. D. Hamdani Zuhra (ed.), *A brief history of Shah-Hamdan-mosque known as Khanquah-i-Moualla, Srinagar-Kashmir* & *Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani* (*may Allah be pleased with him*), n. d., Srinagar: The Young Attendants of Khanquah-i-Moualla, p.15.

26. Initially, the worn out portion was not repaired. Instead, it was settled that a storey would be added to the *Khanqah*. Two years passed yet no concrete steps were taken in this regard. Realization dawned on the Queen. She became so resolute that she went ahead and undertook completion of the task hitherto ignored. She sold her jewellery and ornaments and got the *Khanqah* reconstructed. On completion of the work, Queen Salih gave the workmen and the disabled people gifts. A banquet was held for 10,000 people. With Sultan Muhammad Shah's seal of approval, she nominated Saiyid Muhammad, the son of Saiyid Ali, as the superintendent (*sajjada nishin*). Muhammad Yusuf Teng (ed.), *Keiashur Encyclopaedia* (in Kashmiri), vol. 1, 1989, Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages p. 161.

27. G. M. D. Hamdani Zuhra, op. cit., p. 16.

28. M. Y. Teng (ed.), op. cit., p.161.

29. As stated by another source, Alamgir Aurangzeb seized half portion of the *jagir*. In lieu, he fixed an annual stipend (*wazifa*) of Rs 9000/- for the six guardians of equal number of closets. M. Y. Teng (ed.), ibid., p. 161.

30. In 1144 A.H. / 1731 A.D., on Thursday forenoon the *Khanqah's* roof and ceiling got burnt in an accidental fire. Slowly the entire building perished.

31. He built closets round it and four columns were firmly erected amid them.
    Later, due to the earthquakes of 1218 A.H. /1803 A.D. and 1243 A.H. / 1827 A.D. rafter of the *Khanqah* fell off and it was put in place again.

32. M. Y. Teng (ed.), op. cit., p. 161.
    G. M. D. Zuhra Hamdani, op. cit., p. 16.

33. Yaqub petitioned the British Government to give him an allowance. He claimed descent from Saiyid Ali Hamadani and craftily succeeded in proving his inheritance of the *jagir* of the *Khanqah* by making mention of some agreement between Mir Muhammad Hamadani.

34. Mukhtar Shah Ashai gave several donations for the repair and refurbishment of the *Khanqah*-I-Mu'alla. He was in charge of its rebuilding in the mid-1880s.
    Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of belonging: Islam, regional identity, and the making of Kashmir,* 2003, New Delhi: Permanent Black, p. 29.

35. T. N. Madan (ed.), *India's religions: perspectives from sociology and history*, 2004, Oxford.

36. Pandit Kalhana, *Rajatarangini: a chronicle of the kings of Kashmir*, vol.1, translated with an introduction, commentary and appendices by M. A. Stein, 1979 (reprint edition), Motilal Banarsidass, first book, p. 9.

37. A modern writer opines that the Kubrawi Sufi was separated from the Kashmiri masses by linguistic barriers. M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam*, 2002, p. 65.

38. Jafar Badakshi, *Khulasat* al-*Manaqib*.
    Haidar Badakshi, *Manqabat* al-*Jawahir*.

39. Emile Durkheim, *Elementary forms of religious life*.

40. Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 1967 (reprint edition), Srinagar: Kesar Publications, p. 289.

41. The fervid devotees of Saiyid Ali Hamadani regard the *Awrad-i-Fathiya* as his everlasting relic. The great Kubrawi Sufi is said to have bestowed this perpetual gift exclusively upon the people of Kashmir. It is a concise prayer in Arabic providing a comprehensive idea of the basic principles of Islam. Its contents are read in a reverberating tone.

42. *Zikr* means commemoration; the praise and glorification of Allah; reciting of the Qur'an. *Zikr* is an act of devotion practiced by Sufis belonging to various orders. In Kashmir, *zikr*-i-*jahr* (reciting audibly) is an important facet of religious devotion. This kind of *zikr* is especially conspicuous in the shrines and numerous mosques of the Valley.

43. He did not approve of this practice because he regarded it against the injunctions of the *Shari'ah*.

44. A daily lesson or a portion or section from the holy Qur'an read by devout Muslims at a certain time.

45. Saiyid Ali, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Urdu translation by Ghulam Rasul Bhat, Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, 1995, pp. 39, 40.

46. A daily religious duty or task of devotion.

47. *Yagna* is a ceremony in which oblations are offered. The Sultan participated in a yagna to avert famine. On the occasion, he bestowed gifts on the officiating priests. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, p. 53.

48. Saiyid Ali Hamadani did not come (783 / 1381) to Kashmir with the intent of settling for ever. In fact, his mission was to spread the message of peace and brotherhood through the equalitarian gospels of Islam. And no sooner was the mission accomplished than he left for his native land. A modern writer, however, is not in complete agreement with this statement. According to him, the Kubrawi Sufi came into conflict with Sultan Qutubuddin over differing attitudes towards the non-Muslims. 'Dissatisfied with the Sultan's response to his teachings, Saiyid Ali decided to leave Kashmir.' Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, op. cit., p .39.
On the other hand, Muhammad Ishaq Khan calls the supposition that Saiyid Ali Hamadani's relations with the Sultan were strained on account of the latter's friendly attitude to the Hindus a 'grave error'. The author makes reference to two letters written by the Kubrawi Sufi to Sultan Qutubuddin.
An excerpt from the first letter: "If a Brahman peeps into my (inner condition), he will turn me out of his sight; in that he

would not allow the presence of a wicked man like me before the idol." (Saiyid Ali Hamadani, *Majma-Rasail*, f.26b).
In the second letter addressed to the Sultan, advice is given on rendering equitable justice to the privileged and the common man for subjects of the Sultan were the children of Allah. (Saiyid Ali, op. cit.). M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam*, 2002, pp. 66, 67.

49. Sayid Ali, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

50. Conferring of benefits by God on obstinate sinners.

51. By means of intense yoga, or concentration of the mind, it is quite possible to achieve magical powers, and to perform apparently impossible actions; but this is nothing but the art of conjurer (who does slight-of-hand tricks). The true yogi disdains such miraculous powers. The yoga to which he devotes himself is union with the Supreme Self, by acquiring the knowledge of own Self. Sir George Grierson and D. Lionel Barnett, *Lalla-Vakyani, or the wise sayings of Lai Ded: A mystic poetess of Kashmir,* 1920, London, p. 58.

52. M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam*, 2002, pp. 65, 67.

53. To cite an example: 'The Kashmiri Muhammadan will tell you as many and long stories concerning this Shah Hamadan, or Saiyid Ali as the Kashmiri Pandit will tell about Lal Ded _how that when Timur Lang slew all the saiyids in his country, he accused that monarch of impiety and said that he would not stay in his country, but by virtue of his holiness would transport himself through the air to Kashmir; and how that he alighted in the very spot, where now the famous mosque stands in the midst of Srinagar, and within a few days after his arrival here converted so many Hindus to Islam that two-and-a-half Kharwars of Yonis or Brahmanical threads were delivered up to him.' J. Hilton Knowles, *A dictionary of Kashmiri proverbs and sayings*, 1985 (reprint edition), New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, p.20.

54. Pandit Srivara, *Rajatarangini*, English translation by J. C. Dutt, under the title Kings of Kashmira, vol 3, 1935, p. 235.

55. Ram Chandra Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, 1971 (reprint edition), p.79.

56. Muhammad Ishaq Khan, "A study of ritual behaviour and its impact on the evolution of Kashmiri Muslim society", *Islam and Christian Muslim relations*, Volume 5, Number 1, 1994, pp. 24, 25.

57. The Qur'an, surah 72, verse 18.

58. O Master!

59. O Chief! Also called Amir-i-Kabir or Commander of the faithful (a title assumed by the *Khalifas*). Besides holding the titles of Shah-i-Hamadan and Amir-i-Kabir, Saiyid Ali Hamadani is remembered as *Bani*-i-*Islam* or *Bani*-i-*Musalmani* i.e. the founder of Islam (in Kashmir).

60. *Qibla* is the direction Muslims turn their faces to when offering prayers, whether in their public or private devotions, i.e. the Kaba in Mecca.

61. The local Urdu dailies, particularly, *The Aftab* and *The Srinagar Times* were replete with such appeals in the 1990s.

62. M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam*.

63. Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

64. At present the sermon is delivered by Maulvi Riyaz Ahmad Hamadani.

65. On this occasion, numberless devotees gathered together. Mirak Shah Kashani, a renowned *fakir*, laid the foundation stone. Shaikh Abdullah was also present. Addressing the devotees, he called the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla an undisputed Islamic Centre of the State. He appealed for donations so as to make its precincts more spacious in view of the ever-increasing number of pilgrims.

66. A modern historian opines that the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla, in due course of time, became not only a centre for religious but also for political activities of the Muslims of Kashmir. Muhammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar 1846-1947: A study in socio-cultural change*, 2006 (third edition), Srinagar: Gulshan Books, p.7.

67. "...before 1931 the Muslims of Kashmir were completely under the spell of the two religious heads of Srinagar, the Mir Waiz of Jama Masjid and the Mir Waiz of Shah Hamadan mosque, who were quite at logger heads with each other. It is the religious, the merchant and the landed leadership which was first concerned with articulating the grievances and aspirations of the Muslims of the middle class." Muhammad Ishaq Khan, *Perspectives on Kashmir: Historical Dimensions*, 1983, Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers, p. 141.
'Owing to their (the Mirwaiz of the *Khanqah* and the Jama Masjid) popularity in the community and their strong hold on

the masses, they have always exerted a considerable influence in the politics of the State. There is, however, no denying the fact that the Mir Waiz of the Jama Masjid is a bigger personality than the Mir Waiz Hamdani of *Khanqah*-i-Mualla.' Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, 2002 (reprint edition), Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers, p. 119.

68. Some of the memorialists were exiled and their landed property confiscated. The two Mirwaiz were let off with a warning, but all official privileges enjoyed by them were immediately stopped. The demonstrators were summarily dealt with and punished. P. N. Bazaz, ibid., pp. 84, 85.

Again, a deputation of *khuddam* of the *Khanqah* went to Shimla and presented a memorandum mentioning grievances of the Muslims of Kashmir to the Viceroy. This time desired results were achieved as the Maharaja was asked to look into the matter. Munshi Sirajuddin, an employee at the office of the British Resident, and Nur Shah Naqshbandi, a *jagir*dar, led the deputation. G. M. D. Hamadani Zuhra (ed.), op. cit., p. 20.

69. "This was one of the most important meetings in the history of the movement. In certain respects it was unique. Both of the irreconcilable Mir Waizes appeared on the same platform." P. N. Bazaz, op. cit., p. 125.

70. Hailing from the North-West Frontier Province, Abdul Qadeer came to Srinagar with a European visitor as his cook.

71. Mirwaiz Ahmadullah Hamadani, the chief preacher of the *Khanqah*, addressed the masses wearing a shroud and braced himself for arrest. He was exiled for some time. He is interred in the cemetery annexed to the *Khanqah*.

72. Though Maharaja Hari Singh initiated several reforms, these were considered inadequate; and discontent continued to grow. James P. Ferguson, *Kashmir: An historical introduction*, 1961, London: Centuar Press, pp. 76, 77.

73. Their refusal led them to prison. The leaders including Ghulam Ahmad Zuhra were exiled for a short period.

74. Two young men and one pregnant woman sustained bullet injuries and perished in the aftermath of the shooting. The western wall of the *Khanqah* was also damaged. (The bullet marks are still there. Even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Asif Ali, on their visit to the Valley, went to see the marks.) Kashmiris struck work for three days in protest against the dastardly attack. Signboards were installed at the entrances prohibiting the entry of armed men in uniform into the holy precincts.

75. A special correspondent of *The Tribune* on June13, 1946, commented on the political importance of the *Khanqah* in these words: "There is only one trouble spot at present in Kashmir Valley, the Khanka Mohalla (*Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla) of Srinagar where a batch of workers of the National Conference court arrest every evening. Elsewhere, complete calm prevails."

76. Following words have been inscribed on a slab near the platform:

"تعمیر پلیٹ فارم بیادگار آزادی و تقریر یوذریما و اپریل ۱۹۳۱ء"

77. Mohibbul Hasan, op. cit., p. 269.

78. The main entrance is on the eastern side. It is known as Babul Islam. It was widened to prevent inconvenience experienced by pilgrims coming in droves on the *'urs* and other ceremonial congregations. There are pastures on both sides of the *Khanqah*'s courtyard. A hamam and a nurkhana can be spotted on the left side. On the left corner, towards the western side, lies the cemetery of Shaikh Baba Ali Wani.

79. The capital is sixteen-sided.

80. The *Kibriyat-i-Ahmar* on the circumference of the *Khatam*band followed by *Awrad-i-Fathiya* has been inscribed in an exquisite manner.

81. *Khat-i-gulzar* is a kind of flourished handwriting.

82. Words are written upside down in the *khat-i-m'akus* style.

83. *Khat-i-rehan* is a kind of Arabic writing used on monuments etc.

84. Some verses of the Qur'an and the *Awrad-i-Fathiya* on its walls have been painted in gold.

85. *Khat-i-naskh* is a kind of Arabic writing.

86. R. C. Kak, op. cit., p. 79.

87. The whole structure of the main building of the mosque is wooden. So as a precautionary measure against fire due to electric current, the entire wiring has been done in fireproof rubber tubes.

88. In the name of Allah the most Beneficent and Merciful.

89. An ancient arithmetical arrangement of the Arabic alphabet, in which the letters denote the numbers 1 to 1000.

III

The Suharwardi Shrines: Shaikh Hamza Makhdum and Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi

The Suharwardi order[1] is the earliest Sufi *silsilah* that was introduced in Kashmir in the early fourteenth century by Saiyid Sharafuddin Suharwardi. I have already referred to his *Khanqah* and given reasons for its not becoming a centre of pilgrimage in Kashmir. In fact, it was the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum that became an important centre of pilgrimage for the Kashmiris during the medieval times and continues to be a Suharwardi shrine of central importance in contemporary Kashmir. Before I seek to examine the historical reasons for the centrality of the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, it is necessary to throw light on the revival of the Suharwardi order in Kashmir long after the death of Bulbul Shah.

Until the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70), the Suharwardi order seems to have made no impact on Kashmiri society, barring the conversion of Rinchana and his tribe to Islam. As already noted, the *Khanqah* of Bulbul Shah seems to have lost its importance following the death of Bulbul Shah. The political instability and court intrigues in Kashmir after the death of Rinchana also did not allow Bulbul Shah's *Khanqah* to develop as an important pilgrimage centre. Added to this is the fact that Bulbul Shah does not seem to have made any contact with the commoners. On the contrary, Shaikh Hamza

Makhdum[2] established a very wide base at the societal level[3] and thus made a major contribution to the popularity of the Suharwardi order in Kashmir.

REVIVAL

After the demise of Bulbul Shah in 727 A.H./1326 A.D., the popularity of Suharwardi order was on the wane. And it was after a really long time, in one of the regnal years of Sultan Zainuddin Abidin, that a Suharwardi Sufi named Saiyid Muhammad Isfahani graced Kashmir by his presence.[4] This Sufi preferred seclusion and lived apart from society. But this way he made such a reputation for himself that scores of people thronged his doorstep. Not the one to get deterred in his solo spiritual mission, Saiyid Isfahani moved to a village called Khanpur and became increasingly reclusive.[5]

The next Suharwardi Sufi to follow was Saiyid Ahmad Kirmani. He arrived in Kashmir during the rule of Sultan Nazuk Shah (1529-1530 & 1540-1552). The Sultan erected a *Khanqah* for him at Narwuer in Srinagar. He also allotted a yearly allowance from the state income to cater to the needs of the public kitchen set up by Saiyid Kirmani.

Saiyid Ahmad Kirmani's sepulchre lies near the tomb of Shaikh Bahauddin in Srinagar. Among his famed disciples may particularly be mentioned Baba Masud, popular in Kashmir by the name of Narwuer Saheb.

Another Suharwardi Sufi of eminence whose adherents were sequentially foreordained to thrive in Kashmir for a long time was Saiyid Jamaluddin Bukhari. While in Kashmir, he domiciled at the *Khanqah* of Malik Ahmad Yattu.[6] Though the Sufi's sojourn in the Valley lasted for six months only, the Suharwardi order enjoyed almost unparalleled success in Kashmir. Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, the illustrious disciple of Jamaluddin Bukhari made it possible. This peerless Suharwardi Sufi's estimable involvement helped the order expand its geographical and social base.

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE SHRINE OF SHAIKH HAMZA MAKHDUM

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The shrine of the Shaikh Hamza Makhdum reigns almost supreme. Although several scholarly works contain useful information about Shaikh Hamza Makhdum's life and role in the history of Sufism in Kashmir, no attempt has so far been made to study the historical importance of the shrine in forging close ties between Srinagar and the rural areas. Shaikh Hamza Makhdum was essentially a Sufi a with a village background.[7] But he settled in Srinagar with the definiteness of a purpose. His mission was not simply to popularize the teachings of the Suharwardi order but it was to internalize the teachings of the rural based indigenous order of the Rishis too. In this way he widened the scope of the Suharwardi order in the Valley. He gave due respect to the beliefs of the Rishis, in spite of his ability to enroll some of the Rishis like Shankar Rishi, Rupi Rishi and Hardi Rishi as his disciples. He himself used to visit the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi and even advised Mulla Ali Raina to undertake the pilgrimage to this shrine before enrolling him as his disciple. There is ample evidence in the source material to show that Shaikh Hamza Makhdum visited various villages with a spiritual mission and hence acquired fame as a spiritual leader par excellence.

The historical importance of the *Khanqah* of Hamza Makhdum essentially lies in its being a great centre of Sufi learning in the sixteenth century. Shaikh Hamza Makhdum had a great number of disciples in Srinagar and the villages. But his fame rests on the hagiographical works penned by his prominent disciples and *khulafa*. Among these, Baba Dawud Khaki may particularly be mentioned. In his *Dastur-us-Salikin*, Dawud Khaki furnishes important information about the sources and organization of the *Khanqah* life in Srinagar.

During the time of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, several *Khanqahs* existed in Srinagar. His own spiritual guide Saiyid Jamaluddin Bukhari was stationed at the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Ahmad Yattu in Srinagar. When Shaikh Hamza Makhdum visited his *Khanqah*, the *murshid* served him meat and bread received as *futuh*.[8] Various individuals financially supported the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Isma'il Kubrawi, where Shaikh Hamza had received education. We are told that Shaikh Hamza's father had kept the entire amount of ushr (1/10th of his property) for the maintenance of the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Isma'il Kubrawi. [9] Other visitors to the *Khanqah* offered futuh that added to the

resources of the *Khanqah*. In the same way the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum emerged as an important centre of Sufi learning during his own lifetime. Behind such a development was the spiritual personality of Shaikh Hamza himself who set in vogue certain literary traditions in the *Khanqah* itself. Thus his *Khanqah* had not only an *imam* who led the prayers but arrangements were made outside the *Khanqah* for imparting lessons on the Qur'an, the *Hadith*, jurisprudence and Sufism. While Shaikh Hamza himself used to impart education to the Sufis, several theologians and scholars visited his *Khanqah* for gaining spiritual bliss.

Moreover, the rulers and the ruling elite used to visit the *Khanqah* of Shaikh Hamza. His *Khanqah* seems to have become a refuge for the poor during his lifetime. Other visitors to the *Khanqah* were a host of people from various sections of the Kashmiri society who sought the Shaikh's advice on their spiritual and worldly problems.

It has been alleged by a modern historian that Shaikh Hamza Makhdum's shrine is situated on the ruins of a Hindu temple. R. K. Parmu writes that the temple-site of Bhimaswami-Ganesa "was converted into the *ziyarat* of the great saint Makhdum Shaikh Hamza."[10] This is not corroborated by the facts of history. M. A. Stein writes about the different location of this ancient temple in these words: "Ganesa (Vinayaka) is worshipped to this day under the name of Bhimasvamiganesa in a rock lying at the foot of the southern extremity of the Harparvat (Sarikaparvata) close to the Bachdarwaza of Akbar' s fortress. Under the thick layer of red daub with which the stone is covered by the worshippers, its supposed resemblance to the head of the elephant-faced god cannot now be traced, nor whether the face is turned west or east. Sriv. 111.207, mentions the erection under Zain-ul-Abidin of a shrine in honour of Bhimasvamigansa. The rock image of the latter is referred to also by Sahibram in the Tirtha. *In its immediate vicinity lies the ziyarat of Muqaddam Sahib (Makhdum), one of the most popular Muhammadan pilgrimage-places of the Valley* (italics mine)." [11]

It is thus clear that both Hindus and Muslims have appropriated parts of the Hariparbat hillock for their shrines.[12] R. K. Parmu has concocted his own story about the conversion of temple into a *ziyarat.* Had the present site of the *ziyarat*

been a temple, Shaikh Hamza Makhdum' s disciple, Saiyid Mir Khan, would not have meditated there for a long time. Or, had he really converted the temple into a place of worship, Baba Dawud Khaki would have certainly informed the readers about the incident. On the other hand, Khaki does not fail to tell us about his *murshid*'s missionary role in several villages inhabited by the people with animistic beliefs. Thus he got felled a thick poplar (tree) worshipped by the Hindus at the village of Nadihal in Kuihama. As a result of the Shaikh's missionary role, the people of this village embraced Islam en bloc. Shaikh Hamza laid the foundation of a mosque in this village in 972 / 1564. Likewise, Dawud Khaki refers to several other mosques founded by Shaikh Hamza in some villages against the background of the animistic beliefs and other un-Islamic practices of the villagers.[13]

The place that was chosen for meditation by Saiyid Mir Khan, [14] one of the disciples and prominent *khulafa* of Shaikh Hamza, is also said to have been the favourite abode of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum. Mulla Ali Raina is keen to impress upon his readers the spiritual importance of this place. He relates his own spiritual experience and that of his *murshid* in order to highlight its importance as an abode of bliss. This sacred place was turned into the tomb of Shaikh Hamza after his death.

During his lifetime, Shaikh Hamza Makhdum frequented the inviolable spot at the southwest belt of Koh-i-Maran (Hari Parbat). He usually spent forty consecutive days (*chilla*) in seclusion and divine meditation there. Actually, Saiyid Mir Khan, who had a flair for masonry, had chosen this site for himself to be his burial place after death. Accordingly, he started working on it. But whatever he constructed would be found in a shambles the very next day. So, Mir Khan, in a state of confusion, performed the *istikhara* [15] and had a déjà vu that this particular place, at an appropriate time, was to be utilized by his *murshid*, Shaikh Hamza. Mir Khan then met him and told the tale. With his *murshid*'s approval, he once again resumed work on the future graveside, now for his *murshid*, and was successful this time. [16]

In fact, it was Saiyid Jamaluddin Bukhari, the preceptor of Shaikh Hamza, who for the first time chose the southwest declivity of Koh-i-Maran hill as his place for contemplation. Hence in 748 A. H. /1347 A.D, a small area of the hillock was

smashed and some sort of raised surface for worshipping purpose was made. When Shaikh Hamza left Tujjar for Srinagar, he selected the same spot for meditation. He asked Saiyid Khan to make a small dwelling for worship at the place. Hence a portion of the hill was once again leveled and the Zakir Mosque came into being. When Shaikh Hamza passed away, he was laid to rest on the left side of this mosque.

THE SITE OF PILGRIMAGE

The shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum is counted among the six exalted places (*shash buq'a 'aliya*) of Kashmir; the rest being the Hazratbal *Dargah*, the *Khanqah*-i-Mualla, the shrines of 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir, Dastagir Saheb and Hazrat Naqshband Mushkilkusha. The shrine complex of Sultan-ul-Arifin Shaikh Hamza occupies the southwest belt of Koh-i-Maran hill [17] just below the fortress.[18] To reach there one has to walk through the gates of Naagar Nagar fort_ Bachi Darwaza and Kathi Darwaza on the west and southeast ends respectively. Two sweeping staircases at either ends lead to the shrine complex. The shrine is situated amidst picturesque surroundings. On the northeast is the Nagin Lake. One can have a view of the famous Dal Lake from the premises of the shrine. On the southwest is situated the traditional part of the Srinagar presenting a spectacular scene.

The site of pilgrimage is an object of adoring regard. It spreads over a vast area. The shrine expanses include the mausoleum of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, [19] the Zakir Mosque, the Salar Beig Mosque, the Inayat Khan Mosque, the Haft Sadat Mosque, a tank, the Maryam Mahal (ladies compartment), a grotto and an inn. Besides, an open-air hermitage can be located near a place called Kasturi Pind situated in the eastern part of shrine complex.[20]

Mausoleum

The tomb of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum was raised by Emperor Akbar in 999 A. H. / 1590 A. D., fifteen years after the Shaikh's death.[21] It was a single storey structure. Its roof had a likeness to the Rishi style pyramidal steeple. An ornamental

arched wall was raised on all sides of the tomb. The ceiling was beautified by *Khatamband*.

The gravestones of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum and Baba Dawud Khaki on the northern side are surrounded by lattice work windows. Satin worked with gold has been spread out on them. The tombs are hemmed in by a marble enclosure. [22] The enclosure has been studded with glass so that the devotees can obtain a sight of its interior housing the tombs. Its ceiling is bedecked with flowers made out of papier mache. The walls inside the mausoleum have been paneled in carved walnut wood that tapers into a beautiful roof-like structure. The exterior of the mausoleum and the enclosure is embellished with wooden lattice work windows.[23] A number of coloured lanterns beautify the place. The mausoleum has a four tiered roof with a gilded finial at its apex.

The Shrine Complex

It was Saiyid Mir Khan who constructed the wall of the shrine compound towering to a height of 45 feet.

In 1125 A. H. / 1713 A.D., Nawab Inayatullah Khan, the Mughal governor of Kashmir, got built several porticoes on the western, southern, and eastern side of the wall formerly raised by Saiyid Mir Khan.

In 1237 A. H. / 1821 A. D., the Afghan governor Ata Muhammad Khan[24] spent a lot of money on the renovation of the shrine.

Shaikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, a governor during the Sikh regime, not only enlarged and repaired the structure but also got constructed concrete long flight of steps ascending to the shrine from Bachi Darwaza.

It is not merely the rulers of Kashmir but also some affluent families of the Valley who have contributed their mite to the construction work related to the shrine from time to time. Among these may be mentioned Khwaja Ghulam Mohiuddin Gandru, who in 1289 A. H. / 1872 A. D., [25] spent a lot of money on the construction work. He also got built a hamam.

Khwaja Muhammad Sakhi Drabu, another wealthy person, got installed the silver plated pinnacle capping its tower.

In recent times, Khwaja Khanyari spent an enormous amount on the construction of the flight of steps leading to the shrine on either way_ Kathi Darwaza and Bachi Darwaza.

The construction work is still going on in the *Khanqah* and a huge amount is being spent on the adornment of the ceiling of the main portico of the shrine with *Khatamband*.

In 1363 A. H. / 1943 A. D., the Intizamia Committee was founded to take stock of the matters appertaining to the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum. It undertook renovation work on a large scale. The stairs on the western side were made using devar stones. By 1365 A. H. / 1945 A. D., the mausoleum and the mosques were roofed with tin. The tomb was beautified by fixing exquisite walnut wood lattice boards and the ceiling by papier mache work. [26] The courtyard was covered by polished divar stones. The rows for offering *namaz* were demarcated by strips of white marble. In addition, a gate was fixed on the eastern end. [27]

Zakir Mosque

The Zakir Mosque built by Saiyid Mir Khan is extant. [28] There are four closets attached to the mosque where people even now sit up for *itikaf.* [29] It has an arched roof. Its walls are plastered with green slaked lime. A small door leads inside. There are two small windows on right and left sides. The mosque has a low vaulted ceiling. Its date of construction is 972 A.H. / 1564 A.D. It was made spacious in 954 A.H. / 1547 A.D.

Salar Beig Mosque

To the east of the mausoleum, on a slightly higher elevation, stands the Salar Beig Mosque.[30] At its southern end is an engraved antechamber whose design and lattice work is similar to that of Chashmashahi's upper one. Salar Beig, the governor deputed by Mughal Emperor Jahangir, got the mosque constructed in 1015 A.H. /1606 A.D. It was purely made of wood.[31] In 1375 A.H. /1955 A.D., the Intizamia Committee took an initiative to rebuild the mosque right from its base.[32] Its size was enlarged. A major portion of the Koh-i-Maran was blown up using explosive and the ground leveled. The mosque was walled

off. Modern-style doors and windows were fixed. On its southern side, the Salar Beig Mosque has a balcony with beautiful twisted iron fencing. While standing on it, one can have a bird's eye view of the Srinagar city.

Inayat Khan Mosque

In 1124 A. H. / 1712 A. D., governor Inayat Khan constructed another mosque after his own name. Ata Muhammad Khan, the Afghan governor, enlarged it.

Haft Sadat Mosque

Some ancestor of Shaikh Ahmad Tarabali [33] built this mosque. The following *haft sadat* or the seven descendents of Muhammad (SAW) are interred in its confines: Saiyid Jalal, Saiyid Baqir, Saiyid Husain, Saiyid Ahmad, Saiyid Jafar, Saiyid Ibrahim and Saiyid Muhammad. By 1369 A. H. / 1949 A. D. reconstruction work on the mosque was completed.

Water Reservoir

Prince Dara Shikoh is said to have constructed the water reservoir that, while approaching the shrine from Kathi Darwaza, can be spotted on the right side. In olden days, people used to fill it with fresh water year after year. So great has been the devotion of Kashmiris towards this shrine that until the mid twentieth century, people from both villages and towns would often throng this shrine during long spells of drought, floods etc. To seek mercy and forgiveness, the loyal devotees of Makhdum Saheb would carry pitcher-pots and leather bags with clear water on their shoulders and while reciting the kalima marched in a procession towards the shrine. And in this manner re-filled the tank with water. Their firm belief was that Allah, through the medium of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, pardoned their sins and freed them from unexpected calamities.[34]

Maryam Mahal

Ladies have been allotted a separate space for offering prayers. As part of the restoration work, the embankment on its southern side was remade. [35] The area of this enclosure was increased. A special feature of this enclosure is its arched windows. A ladies chamber was also constructed. The steepness of the area lends beauty to Maryam Mahal.

The shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum with its huge complex managed by the Waqf Board holds an important position in the religious and social life of large majority of Kashmiri Muslims. While the shrine's importance is basically connected with the life, thought and role of Shaikh Hamza, one cannot overlook the fact that over the years both the rulers and the ruled have added to the popularity of the shrine by showing great veneration to the unsurpassed Suharwardi Sufi of Kashmir.

RELIGIOUS DEVOTION AT THE SHRINE

The shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, being perched on a hillock, is fairly visible from different places in Srinagar. I have often seen Kashmiris facing the shrine with folded hands in a standing position at various places in Srinagar. One can see certain individuals on some of the bridges spanning the river Jehlum in a state of extreme devotion. While talking to some traditional women as well as modern educated persons regarding their daily practice of reciting the *fatiha* and invoking the help of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum in their everyday affairs, I was told by the devotees that they could not think of starting their day without seeking the blessings of the Shaikh. All such devotees have firm faith in the efficacy of the shrine. They are under the fostering care of this Sufi. Sultan as they call Shaikh Hamza Makhdum also helps them in their daily endeavours. It does not matter if in certain cases their prayers go unanswered. But as they believe that there may be something good for their future life in the hidden bountiful store of Allah. So the spiritual intertwining between the Sultan and his devotee continues

unabated. At no stage does the devotee allow any doubt to enter his mind. Since the devotee believes that he is a devotee of the Sultan only, he is not a skeptic. In fact, there is no scope for skepticism, as they maintain, in Sufism. For them surrender to Allah, that is Islam, is not enough. One has to surrender oneself to one's *pir* in all respects. In a state of surrender alone, one may hope to receive spiritual as well as material benefits.

Seen from the above perspective, it is not difficult to understand why the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum continues to be visited by hundreds of men and women every day, especially on Thursdays and Mondays. Such pilgrims come to the shrine from various quarters of Srinagar and every nook and corner of the Kashmir Valley. Some of the devotees knot strings around the trellis of the shrine. Taking advantage of a devotees' desperation, some *mujawirs* promise to pray to Allah on the former's behalf but only in exchange for a few rupees. These *mujawirs* have reasons enough to demand money on several trivial pretexts.[36]

Kashmiri Muslims are excessively devoted to Shaikh Hamza Makhdum and his personality. In addition to the devotees discussed above, there are some individuals who visit the shrine on particular days for gaining spiritual bliss only. They do not visit the shrine with any mundane purpose. They undertake the visit to the shrine under the guidance of their *murshid*. While it is difficult to identify such rare men, it was a satisfying experience for me to talk to at least two persons. For certain reasons they kept their identity concealed. Nonetheless, it is through such individuals that certain Sufi traditions set in vogue by Shaikh Hamza Makhdum continue to be practiced. I may particularly refer to the *chilla*, the forty days retreat from the worldly activities. During my research I could not come across any such individual who practiced *chilla* of the kind under reference. However, during the month of Ramadan, I found a certain distinctiveness characterizing the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum. Several pious individuals of high spiritual calibre are stationed at the shrine and spend the entire month in deep meditation. In particular, the Zakir mosque at the shrine wears a serene and calm look. It is important to note here that Shaikh Hamza laid a great deal of emphasis on *zikr*. He himself used to spend a good deal of time in deep

meditation in this mosque. Hence the mosque is known as Zakir Masjid.

In this mosque one may find several individuals performing *'itikaf* during the last ten days of Ramadan. It has now become customary for certain individual devotees to first offer *nafl* [37] prayers at this mosque before approaching the tomb of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum for *fatiha* and other benedictions. Although the *chilla* has become a rare practice at the shrine, some individuals may be seen contemplating for hours or a day or two at this mosque under the guidance of their spiritual preceptors.

PILGRIM'S PATH

For scores of Sultan-ul-Arifin's devotees, his shrine is that sheltered spot where they seek refuge whenever low-spirited. The calm ambience gives them strength to take on life's challenges.

Shamima Azad, a notable singer of the Valley, in a song penned and sung by her echoes the sentiment of many a Kashmiri:

Khasav Sultan sinz heyrey
We will climb the stairs of the Sultan
Muda sarnie tatiey neyrey
Our prayers will be answered therein

Climbing the stairs leading to the Sultan has cured many a soul. Interview with several devotees served as an eye-opener.

A woman, whose son had a narrow escape when he got hit by a vehicle, was seen sweeping the stairs with a large broom. "As I got cleaning the stairs of Sultan, my son started taking a few steps on the road to recovery," sighed the mother.

Another woman had this to stay about her infant son who injured one of his legs: "He could barely walk. But he got cured the moment he set foot on the first step leading to the Sultan."

A Kashmiri Pandit woman had come to express gratitude. Her daughter could not conceive even after twenty years of marriage. So she made a vow to ascend the steep stairs up the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum every Monday and Thursday

till the Sultan granted her heart's desire. She tied a strand around the wooden screens surrounding the tomb enclosure (the practice is called desh gandin in Kashmiri). Eventually, her daughter was blessed with a girl.

Another Kashmiri Pandit father of a job-seeker took a pledge to climb the stairs leading to Shaikh Hamza Makhdum's tomb till his son found a satisfying job. His wishes were fulfilled the very next day. He, too, had come to express gratitude. "Yesterday I was asking for Makhdum Saheb's intervention with a heavy heart and just today my son received an appointment letter. Indeed, a miracle has happened," he remarked ecstatically.

The place is replete with such anecdotes. Furthermore, many businessmen revealed having reached amazing heights by paying homage and feeding the poor on their way to the shrine complex.

Whenever a person is in trouble, she or he is advised to climb the flight of steps leading to the shrine of Makhdum Saheb. Interestingly, not long ago, children while playing a local game *tuley langun* (played by two) would lift each another on their backs and sing:

Tuley langun tulan ches
Makhdum Sahebun pakan ches

In one of the bridal songs (*wanwun*), the young blushing bride is put in the Sultan's care:

Havalai Hazrat Sultanas

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

At the shrine precincts, one comes across different people. A closer look and one may see among the devotees many young men and women. Their noticeable presence disproves the myth that younger generation is indifferent to spirituality.

Nowadays a large number of people are readily foregoing their weekend fun in favour of a spiritual journey to the shrine. It seems as if they are seeking spirituality like never before. "It is a means of understanding ourselves and the state we are in

and the chaos around us" is their take on their weekly visits to the shrine. Visiting the tomb of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum Kashmiri, offering prayers in congregation and feeding the destitute on the way makes them feel good.

The researcher questioned three young highly educated women on their visits. For them journey to the shrine was not only a mode of reassuring their faith in the Suharwardi Sufi but also a way of unwinding. It gave them the kind of satisfaction that no other this worldly pleasure could offer. They got closer to their faith. They claimed becoming more confident persons.

Even the men in their early 20s don't lag behind. "I love outings with my friends, but if it clashes with my proposed visits, I don't think twice about letting go of the fun," remarked an enthusiastic young devotee.

A majority of these devotees come off affluent families where organization of *Khatmat* gatherings on the occasion of *'urs*, *Milad*, *M'iraj* or any other event has become a customary routine. This practice has also prompted many among them to throng the shrines. Their contention is that holding of such assemblages at home made them aware of their distinct Kashmiri identity. Moreover, some have been inspired by their parent's devotional visits. According to them, listening to *n'at*, *zikr* and spiritual discourses on the life of a Sufi serves as an eye opener. Anecdotes of the exemplary life of a Sufi act as a guide and provide a key to the numerous problems they might be involved in. The didactic message being conveyed either in Kashmiri or Urdu is easily understood and assimilated. For these people it is also a way of drawing lessons.

In today's times young people are finding it difficult to cope with life. They are confronted with peer pressure. Many among those questioned had gone through broken marriages. Added to this are the acts of violence. So being one amongst the shrine's serene ambience gives them solace. They flock to the shrines to seek peace.

THE *'URS* CELEBRATIONS

While devotees visit the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum throughout the year, the chief occasion for the pilgrimage is his death anniversary, a festival known as *'urs*.

The exact figures of attendance at the *'urs* are not available, though according to a rough estimate about 35,000-40,000 people visit the shrine on this occasion. The *'urs* falls 24th Safar. The first day of *'urs* is exclusively meant for men and the second one for women. In fact, it is the Waqf Board that, in order to avoid rush, makes an appeal to the women to visit the shrine on the second day. However, the appeal, whenever made, is seldom heeded neither in this shrine and nor elsewhere. Both men and women are present in droves on both the days. But the number of women present on the second day of *'urs* is much more than those present on the first one.

One of the marked characteristics of the *'urs* celebrations in Kashmir has been the number of days specified for the purpose. Thus the *'urs* celebrations at the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum continue for 13 days as compared to 12 at the *Dargah* of Hazratbal and 11 at the shrine of Dastagir Sahib.

All the local papers carry a circular issued by the Waqf Board regarding the schedule of programmes about the shrine concerned. The programme usually appertains to the organization of religious assemblies at the shrine on the appointed times preceding and following the prescribed prayers.

An important feature of the *'urs* celebrations is the organization of religious assemblies for a whole night preceding the main day of the *'urs*. The number of devotees who participate in such an assembly and remain awake the whole night is quite large. The participants include both men and women. These assemblages, known as *shab*[1] in Persian and Kashmiri, are marked by the performance of nawafil and recital of invocatory prayers, *durud*, *n'at*, [38] and *manqabat*.[39] The *khatib* of the mosque or some religious scholar, invited especially for the purpose, delivers a sermon for several hours. The sermon usually highlights the contribution of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum to the spread of Islam in Kashmir. The *manqabat* are recited by *manqabat khwans* in praise of the Shaikh. His glorious deeds are often eulogized. This is how a close spiritual, emotional and historical bond between the shrine and the Kashmiris has been maintained for centuries through the organization of rituals with a distinct local flavour.

So strong has been the impact of such gatherings on the Kashmiris that despite the emergence of modern religious

reform movements, the entire shrine complex remains filled with capacity during the *shab*.

The most common mode of seeking the blessings of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum is through the loud recital of a *khatam-i-sharif* in a group. The mode of recitation is a peculiar chanting in praise of Allah, the Prophet (SAW), and Shaikh Hamza. The common belief is that the Shaikh holds a spiritual *darbar* (court) on special occasions at the shrine. Hence such occasions also provide an opportunity to the devotees to submit their petitions in what is believed to be the court of the King of Gnostics (Sultanu'l-'Arifin) or, more commonly, the *Darbar*-i-*Sultani* (Sultan's court).

It is not merely at the shrine of Shaikh Hamza that spiritual courts are believed to be held on special occasions, but such a belief is maintained at other shrines too. But there is something different about the shrine of Shaikh Hamza. There is a popular belief among the devotees that most matters ranging from domestic affairs to politics of the Kashmir Valley are decided in the court of Shaikh Hamza. It might sound strange, yet true, that the Shaikh appeared in a vision to some Kashmiris at the time of tribal invasion (October 1947). Some spiritual experiences related by certain Kashmiris to their friends during the post-Partition period, though belonging to what Henry Corbin calls the "phenomenological truth" [40] are, nevertheless, without any historical content. One such experience was narrated to the researcher's grandfather Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Khan by Ghulam Ahmad Darel, a prominent businessman of Nowhatta in Srinagar, who had a vision of Shaikh Hamza in his dream. The Sufi is said to have told his devotee that he would drive the tribal invaders out of his homeland.

Similar other stories are still current among various families in Srinagar. It is outside the domain of history to solely rely on spiritual experiences as an authentic historical source. Nonetheless, persistence of a strong belief that Shaikh Hamza was spiritually instrumental in driving the tribal invaders out of Kashmir points to the revitalization of the identity consciousness of the Kashmiris. This was in tune with the ideology of the National Conference leadership of the pre-1947 era. My object is not to doubt the authenticity of spiritual experiences of this sort since one cannot rule out the possibility

of the impact of the crisis that Kashmiris went through during the post-Partition period. Therefore it is vital to explore the psychology of the participants in the social drama of Kashmir who were both devotees of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum and political activists. It appears that they were preoccupied with the idea of saving Kashmir. Hence, through constant petitioning in the court of Shaikh Hamza, they seem, at least in their spiritual and historical consciousness, to have made the Sufi intervene in the political affairs of Kashmir . The Shaikh's spiritual intervention may appear to be preposterous on sound historical reasons. But as a student of social history, I cannot ignore completely the subliminal impact of historical (tribal invasion) and spiritual forces (the Shaikh's supposed political interference) on the Kashmiri mind. This also explains why the shrine of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, like the *Dargah* of Hazratbal, became a strong bastion of the National Conference after 1947. Mrs. Indira Gandhi is said to have visited the shrine quite often.

SCHEDULE OF THE *'URS* PROGRAMME

As already mentioned, the annual *'urs* at the shrine of Mahbub-ul-'Alam Shaikh Hamza Makhdum is celebrated with traditional gaiety on 24th Safar. An elaborate programme mentioning the religious activities connected with the *'urs* is compiled. The administrator of the shrine notifies it for the information of the populace at large. The publishing division of the shrine advertises the programme in the local dailies. Alongside, the prescribed prayers' timings on the days of *'urs* celebrations are also released.

23rd SAFAR_ THE PRECEDING EVE

The 23rd of Safar, the day preceding *'urs*, is the *shab-i-awwal* or the first night. On this eve, benedictions are pronounced, the names and attributes of Almighty Allah are repeated orally, *durud*, *n'at*, *munajat* etc. are also read. The gathering is enlivened by the soulful and collective rendition of the prayers by the devotees. The religious meetings are convened after offering of the *maghrib* prayer in congregation. Later, after the *'isha* prayer, vigil is observed with prayers and

recitation of some verses of the Qur'an selected exclusively for the purpose. Scores of devotees gather to participate in the night long recitals.

The number of devotees is large especially after the *maghrib* prayer. They convene to participate in the shab-i-awwal ceremony that takes place immediately after the offering of the *'isha* prayer in congregation. The detailed programme of the *'urs* celebrations makes a mention of the *'Isha* and the *maghrib* prayers' timing on this day. Accordingly, the first religious gathering is held after the *maghrib* prayer and lasts till the *'isha* prayer. The number of devotees goes on increasing as a special religious meeting is organized once the congregational *'isha* prayer is offered. It is called *mehfil-i-Awrad-i-Fathiya*. Several thousands of devotees assemble and recite the *Awrad-i-Fathiya* in chorus. When the recitation is complete, the recitals rendered before the commencement of the *'isha* prayer is resumed. This time the recitals continue till the *fajr* prayers (24th Safar) and include verses of the Qur'an, *durud*, *n'at*, *munajat* etc. Thus the devotees both men and women of all ages keep themselves awake on the first eve of this solemn ceremony and enliven their souls.

24TH SAFAR_ THE FIRST DAY OF *'URS*

The auspicious day of 24th Safar is celebrated as the first day of *'urs*. The timings of *fajr*, *zuhr*, *"asr*, *maghrib* and *'isha* prayers falling on this day are notified through the local press. The idea is to ensure maximum participation of the people in the congregational prayers.

25TH SAFAR_ THE FINALE

The concluding ceremony takes place the next day, the 25th of Safar. The day is observed as the second day of *'urs*. It is exclusively reserved for women devotees, though the shrine sees almost equal participation of men and women on both the days. Nevertheless, elaborate arrangements are made for women pilgrims so that no inconvenience is caused.

An appeal is made to all the pilgrims to stay calm. This message is reiterated through local dailies.

The event is highly organized. Assisstance of the departments of Electricity, Water Works, Transport, Municipality etc. is sought to carry out the proposed ceremonial *'urs* programme effectively. Arrangement is made for the plying of additional buses on all the routes leading to the shrine of the renowned Suharwardi Sufi Shaikh Hamza Makhdum Kashmiri. [41]

THE SHRINE OF BABA NASIBUDDIN GHAZI

The shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi is situated in Bijbehara.[42] This shrine has been chosen for study because of its unrivalled importance as the second major Suharwardi shrine in the Valley. Baba Dawud Khaki, of course, is entombed in Srinagar. But as compared to the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin, his tomb does not have any representative character. This phenomenon may be explained in terms of his popularity as the most distinguished scholar and *khalifa* of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum. In fact, Baba Dawud Khaki is more remembered through his works. Another reason why Baba Dawud Khaki's tomb could not become a great centre of pilgrimage is the fact that he lies buried near the tomb of his preceptor Shaikh Hamza Makhdum at the Hariparbat hillock in Srinagar. Remarkably, Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi was a disciple and *khalifa* of Baba Dawud Khaki.

LIFE AND TEACHINGS

Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi was born in 977A.H. / 1569 A.D. at Sialkot.[43] He was the son of Mir Hasan Razi. Baba Nasib was undoubtedly a great Sufi of the Suharwardi order in Kashmir. He was always engrossed in deep meditation and constantly wore a musing expression. In several respects, he played a unique role in the socio-religious life of the Kashmiris.

Baba Nasib got constructed many mosques and toilets in various districts and villages. He provided meals to the indigent. His affection for the mankind, as manifested in his benevolence, earned him the title *Abul Fuqara* or father of the destitute.

In addition to launching a crusade for providing viable social services, he also embarked on a literary mission. He penned fourteen books. Among these, *Zaruri Khurd* is very popular. [44] Matters relating to jurisprudence are expounded in it. Another work titled *Nurnama* is a pioneering treatise on the Rishis. Occurrences in the lives of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi and his *khulafa* are documented in it.

SAYINGS

The sayings [45] of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi are as follows:

1) Baba Nasib said that the grave depreciates the breadth of life. If a wealthy person acquires information about the absolute certainty of death, he will forget all his worldly possessions. And if a poor man is made aware of the reality of death, he will cease to remember his own self.

2) Whoever perceives the Divine, thoughts about one's wife and children obliterate.

3) A self-obsessed person is accompanied by Satan. A person beside oneself with divine love is escorted by the Supreme Being. Humility is preferable to conceit.

4) A moment's realization of the purpose of Creation is better than a thousand year's worship. A person acquainted with the Truth is worthier than thousands of abstainers. Baba Nasib likened such ascetics as sustained themselves only on a frugal diet of wild herbs, leaves and grass to donkeys and cows. Alternatively, men who gorged on delicious food were denounced as belonging to the category of wild animals like wolves and leopards. Here, Baba Nasib adopts this style of utterance as a metaphor for affluent man's obliviousness to poverty.

5) Discernment of the Divine, according to Baba Nasib, is thus beyond the reach of exploiters of the weak. To live for the welfare of the needy is a virtue and a key to the realization of Truth. This ultimate Truth cannot be traded. The cognition of the Supreme Being cannot be traded and neither are pomp and riches of any help in the recognition of Truth.

Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi played a significant role in the social and religious history of Kashmir. His methods of disseminating knowledge about Islam were novel. It can be

safely assumed that in several respects he excelled his contemporaries in widening the purpose and scope of Islamic knowledge in the Valley. His major contribution was to motivate the agriculturists and the lower sections of Kashmiri society to bring their social behaviour in consonance with the teachings of Islam. He engaged a band of *bhands* (folk musicians). He went from village to village. Keeping in view the popularity of folk dancers among the villagers, his ingenious method of inviting the folk to his assemblage through the beating of drums often produced the desired results. The story did not end there. Wherever Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi stationed himself for a few days, provision was made for feeding the needy through a mobile *langar* (public kitchen). Significantly, about 300 to 400 disciples accompanied Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi during his missionary transit throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir.

For these reasons Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi is remembered in several villages of Kashmir as a Sufi philanthropist. Wherever he went, he found a mosque and a bathroom. Even now there is no dearth of villages in Kashmir where a mosque is not named after him. Although he belonged to the Suharwardi order, he seems to have lived like a Rishi. He did not take meat and remained a vegetarian, notwithstanding the fact that several cows were slaughtered at his *langar* daily for feeding the poor. In several respects, Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi seems to have been greatly influenced by the teachings of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi. So great was the influence of the mystic poetry of Shaikh Nuruddin on his mind that he often fell unconscious under its spell. There is every likelihood that during his discourses, he used Shaikh Nuruddin's poetry as vehicle for propagating the teachings of Islam in Kashmir.

It follows that the Suharwardi order, as it developed in Kashmir represented the regional ethos. In this process Islam arose in Kashmir as a religion of love as well as a social force. This is also illustrated by Baba Nasibuddin's attitude towards the non-Muslims. A notable trait of Baba Nasibuddin's social demeanour was his excessively tolerant attitude towards the non-Muslims. Despite his rigorous adherence to the precepts of the *Shari'ah*, he visited the cremating grounds of the Hindus and offered prayers to the departed souls. This strange practice became a matter of great concern among his associates. And

when questioned about the same, his reply was in these words: "Whatever I behold is beyond your view. Many souls of such persons as outwardly died Hindus appear to me as those of believers. And some of them even say (to me): 'Your blessings mitigate our inflictions.' So, I never shirk from this beneficent act." [46]

From the above anecdote, one can sense the seminal impact of the teachings of Baba Nasibuddin on the folk. In fact, the religious environment in which Baba Nasibuddin played the missionary role was conducive to developing the mutual respect of the adherents of Islam and Hinduism for each other's religion. However, Islam being the dominant civilization was able to make its presence felt in all walks of the traditional Kashmiri society, thanks to the missionaries like Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi who had consecrated their life to popularizing the teachings of Islam at the societal level. This is obvious by the fact that the Brahmans of Kashmir neither played a creative role in response to the equalitarian teachings of Islam nor could they counter such surging ideas as an opposition group. Quite to the contrary, the Brahmans gave a tacit recognition to the spiritual authority of the Sufi and the shrines that evolved through periods of Islamic acculturation.

Nothing explains this development in more objective terms than the silence of the Brahmans regarding some questions of critical importance related to their history and beliefs. Here it is important to focus on the ambience created by the folk themselves around the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi. One may notice a grave in the close vicinity of the shrine. This is the alleged tomb of Lal Ded, revered by a small number of traditional Muslim women. No Persian chronicler or hagiographer, including even Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi has referred to it. Had it really been a tomb of Lal Ded, it would have become a popular centre of pilgrimage considering her representative character as a strong advocate of the underprivileged against the Brahmanic supremacy. There is no historical evidence to support the belief regarding the authenticity of the tomb of Lal Ded and still, surprisingly, such a myth got perpetuated around the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin. Noteworthily, the myth did not find a wide acceptance among the Muslims.

During the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries the Valley of Kashmir experienced conversion to Islam in social rather than in mere religious terms. [47] Thus the Kashmiri Muslim culture and the Pandit culture that evolved during centuries of interaction was the product of their social environments. This is the reason that the Kashmiri Pandits living in Bijbehara and around never raised any questions about the supposed tomb of Lal Ded despite the attempts by some Kashmiri Pandit scholars to resurrect her as the exponent of Kashmiri Saivism. [48] Another reason that can be given for Kashmiri Pandit and Muslim writer's omitting mention of the tomb of Lai Ded is the cherished belief that she was above the formalities of either Hinduism or Islam. The basic idea about Lai Ded in Kashmir is that of a wandering woman saint saturated with divine love who would make no distinction between Hindus and Muslims on the grounds of religion. The point is that the Kashmiri Pandit culture and the Kashmiri Muslim culture, as it evolved over centuries, assumed varied dimensions essentially within the framework of Brahmanism and Islam respectively thereby comprising the Kashmiri culture. Therefore the *'urs* ceremonies connected with the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin are reminiscent of the distinctiveness characterizing Islam in Kashmir.

THE *'URS* CELEBRATIONS

No shrine studied within the purview of my thesis offers such a complex array of facts to a researcher engaged in fieldwork as the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi. Here Islam and culture coalesce rather conflict. On the one hand, the devotees at the shrine show strict adherence to the *Shari'ah* by way of their participation in congregational prayers offered at *zuhr* on the eve of *'urs*. On the other, they watch the performances of the *bhands* [49] after *zuhr* prayer until the *muezzin* calls the faithful to the *'asr* prayer. [50] The interlude between *zuhr* and *'asr* is the period which takes a reflective observer deep into the least studied facts of history. Although Muhammad Ishaq Khan has studied this phenomenon in the context of Kashmir' s transition to Islam, nevertheless, we need to elaborate upon the points raised by him in relation to the social importance of the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi. It

must be pointed that Baba Nasibuddin's major contribution in terms of social history was to win the so-called low caste communities to Islam. It is a fact that a majority of such communities had already been assimilated in Islam. But he was the only Sufi who recognized the importance of their role in developing special and close connections between Islam and the folk. We have already stated how he utilized their services for propagating the teachings of Islam among the folk. More importantly, even after his death the folk dancers sought to preserve the historical legacy through their conspicuous presence at several shrines of the Valley. The performance of the *dambael* at the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin raises certain important questions of both religious and social significance.

In the first place, one may ask how the Suharwardi order in Kashmir gave sanction to the folk practice of *dambael* considering the emphasis of the adherents of this order on following the *Shari'ah*. It is certain that Baba Nasibuddin was able to draw the common people to his sermons through the services of folk dancers. However, after his death the folk dancers did not fail to reiterate their indebtedness to Baba Nasibuddin for bringing them within the fold of Islam. This socially significant fact is still reflected in the performances of the folk dancers. During my conversation with them I found them to be deeply historically and socially conscious persons. They do not strictly follow the *Shari'ah* while observing the ordained five times prayers regularly. Yet they are grateful to Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi for raising their status, though in their own estimation. The very fact that they have been able to give performances on the anniversary of Baba Nasibuddin for over centuries, gives them inner peace and contentment. They relate with some measure of pride their humble contribution to spreading the message of Islam in terms of love, brotherhood, and reconciliation. On very sound historical reasons, they regard themselves as the pilgrims of love who, not long ago, were able to attract the rural folk irrespective of the religious and caste affiliations. As Muhammad Ishaq Khan observes "their performances have a symbolic significance for assessing the role of the Rishis in drawing the peasants and farmers to their fold. But, more importantly, the conspicuous presence of the folk dancers on the eve of anniversaries and the villagers age-long interest in them imply that it was a social rather than

mere religious conversion that created the pressures for change which, in turn, also affected the course of Islamic religious development in the Valley. The issues raised by the folk dancers through their acts concern the relation of the individual believer to God, and equally important, contract between the ordinary believer and the saint, who is in direct contact with the God. It was through such contacts that the use of the Kashmiri language as a religious vehicle was fostered and the Islam opened up to people who were not educated. The overall impact of the Rishi Movement was that through the performances given by bands, dambel maets, etc. Islam was brought to the masses in a meaningful way. Since at that time the only education for the illiterate folk was that which is transmitted orally, there arose groups of acrobats and singers who assumed the role of teachers. Thus it is not difficult to understand why the festive occasions at the shrines of the Rishi saints are days of rejoicing and thanksgiving. They commemorate the formative stage of conversion when the commoners entered the fold that proclaimed the equality of all men." [51]

THE SHRINE COMPLEX

The shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi is situated in Bab, one of the wards of Bijbehara. This Suharwardi Sufi is entombed on the northern side of Jama Masjid.

The *Khanqah* is double storied. The stony square block on which it is raised is 5 feet high. The area of the *Khanqah* is 45 feet x 40 feet wide. Its ground floor is mainly composed of carved and polished stones. The *Khanqah* is equipped with a pyramidal steeple. In olden times, it was roofed with birch bark. In 1985, the Auqaf replaced it with concrete tin. Its structure has three protrusions_ one on the north, the other one on the south, and another one on the east. Remnants of lattice woodwork are visible on north south projections.

The protrusion at the front has a porch. In the ground floor, four embellished columns made up of deodar hold up a beautiful ceiling. One can find an old well and an attached bathroom on the front side of the *Khanqah*. Now a hand pump has also been installed.

There is a graveyard in the vicinity of the *Khanqah*. One of the famous poets of Kashmiri language, Abdul Ahad Nazim, is interred there_ on the right side of the *Khanqah*'s entrance.

GENERAL REMARKS

My empirical study of the two major Suharwardi shrines of the Valley points to their significant role not only in the gradual dissemination of the teachings of Islam in a particular regional setting, but more importantly, in giving a distinctive local identity to Islam in Kashmir. This distinctiveness in respect of utilizing the services of the *bhands* and *dambael maets* by a *Shari'ah*-conscious Sufi like Baba Nasib strengthened the links of the rural folk with his shrine on firm historical rather than mere religious grounds. As a result, the folk traditions like *dambael* became an essential part of the *'urs* celebrations at the shrine of Baba Nasib. During the early phase of turmoil in the Valley the *'urs* of Baba Nasib was restricted to the intonation of *khatmat* and offerings of prayers in congregation. The point is that life and rituals at the shrine of Baba Nasib are not just related to Islam alone, but to the folks' phenomenon of experiencing or understanding Islam in social terms. Such a phenomenon is thus characterized by a meaningful interaction between religion and history. This historical fact cannot be described as an end in itself but a continuous process in which a convert seeks to understand his religious experience not so much in theological as in historical terms. It is thus outside the domain of a student of history to argue whether the age-old beliefs cherished by the folk about the sanctity of the ritual of *dambael* are Islamic or un-Islamic. What is important to a student of history is the mammoth assemblage of the devotees of the shrines.

FOOTNOTES:

1) The founder of Suharwardi order is Shaikh Ziauddin Abul Suharwardi (1167). He authored *Aadab-ul-Muridin*. But the credit for popularizing the

Suharwardi order goes to his nephew and successor, Shaikh Shihabuddin Abu Hafs Umar bin Abdullah (1144-1234). An illustrious writer, his well-known work is *Awarif-ul- Ma'arif*. The Sufi doctrines in India are based upon widely known and extensively read works like *Kashf-ul-Mahjub* by Al Hujwiri, and Shaikh Shihabuddin's *Awarif-ul-Ma'arif* is second such work.

In India, Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya (1182-1262), a native, of Khurasan founded the Suharwardi order.

2) Very well known in Kashmir as Mahbub-ul-Alam or beloved of the universe, Shaikh Hamza Makhdum was born in the year 900 A.H. / 1494 A.D. His place of birth is Tujjar. His father Usman Raina patronized learning and supported the seminary of Shaikh Ismail Kubrawi at Srinagar. Shaikh Hamza received his early education at this seminary. Shaikh Fathullah, the son of Shaikh Ismail, personally imparted lessons to him for a year. Shaikh Hamza learnt the Qur'an and its commentary under the guidance of Maulana Darwesh of the same institution. At Madrasat-ul-Dar-us-Shifa, the academy founded by Sultan Hasan Shah, his instructor was Maulana Lutfullah. There he studied books on jurisprudence and some works of Saiyid Ali Hamadani. Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century*, Bhartiya Publishing House, pp.20, 21.

3) There is enough information in the Persian sources about the visits of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum to several villages. While sometimes he remained the guest of his disciples, on other occasions he found time to enjoy the beauties of nature in the company of his disciples. He did not simply popularize the Suharwardi order by way of enrolling disciples but also made his presence felt in the rural society as a Sufi preacher of high calibre.

4) He was the disciple of Saiyid Jalaluddin Bukhari of Uch, popularly known as Makhdum Jahaniyan (1308-84).

5) Khanpur can be found in the Baramulla district of Kashmir.

6) M. A. Yattu was the vizier of Sultan Hasan Shah (1472-84).

7) Tujjar lies on the north of Sopore. It is situated at a distance of 67 km from Srinagar city. Walter Lawrence, the erstwhile Settlement Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir State in 1890s, writes that Makhdum Sahib's companions laughed at his preaching and his prophecies, and insisted on his taking his share in the corvee of the village. So he left Tujjar and cursed his people that they should want water not only for their crops but also for their drink. The curse came true, for Tujjar and Zainagir are dry to this day. Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 1967, Srinagar: Kesar Publishers, p.289.

8) Unsolicited grant. *Dastur-us-Salikin*, folio, 54b.

9) Ibid., f. 36b.

10) R. K. Parmu, *A history of Muslim rule in Kashmir: 1320-1819*, 1969, People's Publishing House, p. 434.

11) Pandit Kalhana, *Rajatarangini: a chronicle of the kings of Kashmir*, vol. 1, translated by M. A. Stein, 1979 (reprint edition), Motilal Banarsidass, third book 352, p. 103.

12) Ram Chandra Kak, *Ancient monuments of Kashmir*, 1971 (reprint edition), p. 88.

13) *Dastur.*, f. 241.

14) Mir Saiyid Ahmad Khan had crossed Hindustan and reached Kashmir. He decided to stay in the Valley.

15) A prayer for good things, blessings.

16) Shaikh Baba Muhammad Ali Raina, *Tadhkirat-ul-'Arifin*, f.360.
Khwaja Ishaq Qari, *Chilchihat-ul-'Arifin*, f. 106.

17) At the foot of the hill lies the ward of Makhdum Handu. Dara Shikoh Mosque and the Dara palace can be seen just below the shrine premises. Muhammad Yusuf Teng (ed.), *Keiashur Encyclopaedia* (in Kashmiri), vol. 1, 1989, Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, p. 213.

18) Atta Muhammad Khan Barakzai built the fort situated on the top of this hillock.

19) Besides, Baba Dawud Khaki, Saiyid Mir Khan, Shaikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, Saiyid Manik Shah, *haft sadat* or the seven descendents of the Prophet (SAW), Khwaja Ziauddin, Saiyid Muhammad Daulat, Saiyid Muhammad Aalim, Saiyid Muhammad Aazam, Saiyid Muhammad Aadil, Shaikh Hasan Lalu, Mir Muhammad Pampori, Baba Maqsud Makhdumi, Baba Muhammad Nizam, Baba Abdullah Makhdumi, Baba Ayatullah, Shah Rahmatullah Sani and Mir Inayatullah are also entombed in the shrine precincts.

20) The devotees pray at the open-air hermitage, especially, in scorching summer months.

21) In 1006 A.H. /1597 A.D., Akbar started building the Naagar Nagar wall. At the same time orders were given for the construction of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum's mausoleum.

22) To the east of the enclosure lies the gravestone of the governor Ghulam Mohiuddin.

23) Each lattice work window bears a design different from the rest.

24) Atta Muhammad Khan issued coins in the names of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi and Shaikh Hamza Makhdum.

25) In the same year work on Abbas Beig Mosque got completed. This mosque too can be found within the confines of the pilgrimage centre.

26) While the shrine complex was being renovated, the centuries old remnants of its former glory were wiped out. They didn't fancy preserving the rich architectural heritage. The original doors and windows of the mausoleum and the Salar Beig Mosque were reshaped to fit in the new architectural plan. Several architectural remains of the Mughal and the Afghan period were replaced with shapeless objects. Teng (ed.), op. cit., p. 219.

27) The gate has been named Bab-ul-Sultan.

28) Saiyid Manik Shah put in a lot of labours on construction of the Zakir Mosque.

29) Seeking retirement in a mosque during the last ten days of the fast of Ramadhan. During the said period the worshipper does not leave the place. The time is spent in reciting the Quran and in performing *zikr*.

30) Within the shrine premises, the Salar Beig Mosque holds significance after the mausoleum. Teng (ed.), op. cit., p. 218.

31) Age had rendered the wood brittle.

32) The work got completed after twenty years.

33) A nineteenth century Sufi.

34) Abdul Majid Raina Makhdumi, *Tadhkira-i-aslaf yani Sultan-ul-'Arifin* (in Urdu), 1999, Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers, Shaikh Muhammad Usman and Sons, p. 256. The author laments that the present generation of Kashmir has forgotten this practice.

35) This was done in accordance with the latest scientific developments.

36) As a kid, the researcher who had come with her mother, was once wandering around the shrine of Makhdum Saheb when a *mujawir* gave her a *shirni* which she ate thinking it to be a *tabbaruk*. But to her surprise, he held out his hand gesturing that money be given to him. Her mother who was at short distance away noticed and came to her rescue. The point is that it is not only the helpless that are

fleeced but also sometimes even kids are not spared. Thankfully such *mujawirs* are in a minority.

37) "A voluntary act". A term applied to such acts of devotion as are not enjoined by the teaching of Muhammad (SAW), or by his example.

38) A descriptive epithet or phrase, eulogium, encomium (especially of the Prophet (SAW)).

39) Anything in which a man glories or which confers on him pre-eminence; praise specially of the Prophet (SAW) and his (SAW) companions.

40) M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam: the role of Muslim Rishis*, 2002 (paperback edition), New Delhi: Manohar, p. 207.

41) The shrine of Makhdum Saheb witnesses celebrations on the *'urs* of Baba Dawud Khaki, though on a much smaller scale. This *'urs* falls on 3rd Safar.

42) An ancient town of considerable importance built on both banks of the river Jehlum between Islamabad and Srinagar, from which places it is distant by road about 6 and 30 miles, respectively. Baron Hugel states that Bijbehara was one of the ancient capitals of Kashmir; the name may perhaps be derived from Vijaya Para, the City of Victory, or from Vijaya Bijiri, a king who is believed to have reigned in this neighbourhood about 67 B.C.
There are two *ziarats* in Bijbehara. Of these, the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi is the largest and most famous. It is situated towards the north end of the town.
Quarter Master General in India in the Intelligence Branch (compiler), *Gazetter of Kashmir and Ladakh*, 1992 (reprint edition), Delhi: Manas Publications, pp. 226-228.

43) Teng (ed.), op. cit., vol. 2, p. 49.

44) Ibid., p. 50.

45) Hasan Pir Ghulam, *Asrar-ul-Akhyar*, Urdu translation entitled *Tadhkira-i-Auliya-i-Kashmir*, 1960, Kashmir: Kohinoor Press, pp. 210, 211.

46) Ibid., p. 210.

47) M. Ishaq Khan, op. cit.

48) B. N. Parimoo, *The ascent of self: a re-interpretation of the mystical poetry of Lalla-Ded*, 1978, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

49)'This religious exercise is known as *Dumali* or *Zikr*. It serves the same purpose as the dance of the Darwesh. The mind is thrown into a whirl, and the dancers fall into religious ecstasy.' Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 1967 (reprint edition), Srinagar: Kesar Publications, f. n., p. 289.

50) Before the onset of turmoil in the Valley, on the last night of the five days *'urs* celebrations, the *bhand* would randomly choose an adolescent amongst them. He was supposedly sanctified and so attired in all the finery just like a groom. He was the *maeili maharaz* or the fair's groom. At 2:00 a.m. sharp he would march in a procession towards a place called Padshahi Bagh. People crowded him and often longed to touch him. By the time he was back at the shrine (the place where he had started his journey), his clothes would be in tatters. He was expected to return before the *fajr* prayer. The origin of this bizarre practice could not be traced.

51) M. Ishaq Khan, op. cit., pp. 195, 196.

IV
Some Major Rishi Shrines: 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir, Baba Zainuddin, Rishi Moul, Baba Rishi and Batmalu Saheb

The shrines of Muslim Rishis are found in numerous parts of the Kashmir Valley. Besides, there are a number of sites in the Valley which are dedicated to the memory of some Rishis, particularly Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, the founder of the order who moved from place to place to spread the message of Islam in the Hindu-Buddhist surroundings. Such sites have been protected as sacred places. One may notice a small wall enclosing the site or some flags hoisted there. Kalhana' s designation of the Valley as the land of *tirtha* is still true, though the transition from Hinduism and Buddhism to Islam unfolds itself as a story of the gradual assimilation of the ancient practices in the latter.

Of over several hundred shrines of the Rishis, I have chosen only five shrines for an in depth study considering their representative character. These are the shrines of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, Baba Zainuddin, Rishi Moul, Baba Rishi and Shaikh Dawud. Suffice to say, the shrine of 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir at Tsrar-i-Sharif does not merely represent the Rishi order itself as a whole but, more importantly, the ethos of Kashmir. The shrine of Baba Zainuddin at Aishmuqam besides being the only

one of its kind in several respects continues to hold a place of immense social importance. The shrine of Rishi Moul at Anantnag (Islamabad) is marked by its uniqueness in respect of reaffirming the Rishis' strong belief in vegetarianism. It is remarkable that the shrines of Baba Rishi as well as Batmalu Sahib while essentially promoting the cause of Rishi order in Kashmir have contributed a great deal to the spread of religious tolerance in the Valley. The idea, however, is not to undermine the same role played by the other Rishi shrines in the Valley. Yet in view of the location of the five major Rishi shrines under study, a detailed discussion on their unique role in influencing the attitudes of the people towards life and religion is inevitable.

'ALAMDAR-I-KASHMIR SHAIKH NURUDDIN RISHI

Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi is the most celebrated Kashmiri Sufi having a widespread reputation. He founded the native order of the Sufis of the Valley called Rishi. He was born at Kaimuh and the day of his birth is 10 Zil-Hijja 779 A.H. / 9 April 1378 A.D. Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi enacted a momentous role by redrawing and reorganizing the lifework of the followers of the Rishi order. He not only enjoined them to be earnest and profound in their dedication to Allah but also demanded from them a mode of social conduct that was in perfect harmony with the maxims of the *Shari'ah*.

Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi's religious passage and progress passes through three distinct phases. The first phase is that of an orphan contending resolutely to make a living and supplement his continuance in 'earthly' being. The second one is that of a hermit retreating to a cave at Gophbal near Kaimuh for twelve years with the purpose of recognizing the religious truth. In the final stage he parts with the ways of an anchorite to espouse moral principles of substantial and cogent character.

The moral elements and values of asceticism found an orderly expression and expounding in a lot of Shaikh Nuruddin's metrical compositions. His earlier verses carry impressions of Kashmiri Shaivite philosophy. However, a drift comes up in the Shaikh's thought [1] following his meeting with Saiyid Mir Muhammad Hamadani.[2]

It is noteworthy that Mir Muhammad Hamadani initiated Shaikh Nuruddin into the Kubrawi order at the latter's own solicitation. But this act in no way left the Shaikh's sway over the Rishi movement ineffectual. In his *khat-i-irshad*, Saiyid Mir Muhammad Hamadani, while making a mention of Shaikh Nuruddin, uses the term Rishi and calls him a complete wali. This is indicative of the Kubrawi's Sufi's firm trust in the Kashmiri Sufi in continuing the specific mission of the Saiyid's predecessors.

TSRAR-i-SHARIF

The Muslim shrines in the valley are generally situated amidst of what Lawrence says " 'Noble brotherhoods of venerable trees' of chenars, alms and Kabuli poplar with its white bark and shimmer of silver leaves, give a pleasant shade, and there is always some spring of water for the thirsty. One exception must be made to this description, and that is the shrine of Shekh NuruDin at Chharisharif. The shrine is perched on a dry bare hill, difficult of access and lacking in water." [3] These words of Lawrence are not far from true. Today the physical appearance of the town of Tsrar-i-Sharif has changed due to town planning and the resultant provision made for running water. However, interviews conducted by the researcher with some old residents of Tsrar-i-Sharif as well as their counterparts in the city give evidence of the squalid conditions that prevailed in Tsrar-i-Sharif not long ago. Notwithstanding the inhospitable physical surroundings of Tsrar-i-Sharif, the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi located in the area, was always considered a means of soul-cleansing by the devotees from every nook and corner of the Valley. Lawrence who rightly and perceptively describes Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi as a "national saint" [4] of Kashmir provides us a very useful information on the importance of Tsrar-i-Sharif for the Kashmiris. His remarks about the observance of a ceremony by the Muslims of Kashmir are worth quoting: "Musalmans from all parts of the Valley flock to Chhrar Sharif, and when scarcity is imminent, where calamities such as earthquake, cholera, and drought occur, thousands gather there and sit silent on the hills

around, confessing their sins and begging for pardon. This impressive ceremony is known as Nafl." [5]

Soon after the death of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, the people of Kashmir exhibited eagerness in developing his burial place. Memorials befitting his exalted position were erected at places where he had spent his childhood and reached adolescence or passed moments in reposeful contemplation. A shrine and a *Khanqah* were built at Tsrar by the people under Sultan Zainul Abidin's august auspices. Later, Sultan Ali Shah Chak got built a veranda with carved wooden pillars around the shrine. In the early 19th century the Afghan governor, Ata Muhammad Khan reconstructed the *Khanqah* and the tomb. But he was unable to complete the work.[6] The Deputy Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, resumed the work on the shrine in 1951 and the shrine complex was renovated. In 1964, Shaikh Abdullah as President of the Auqaf Trust took responsibility for managing affairs of the shrine. Memorials were erected by the people at a number of places like Kaimoh, [7] Gophbal, [8] Tsimar, [9] Honstipura etc. and extensive renovations were made whenever the need arose.[10]

The shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi at Tsrar-i-Sharif has been an important centre of pilgrimage for the Kashmiris from very early times. This is evident from the earliest Persian chronicle of Kashmir. As Saiyid Ali, who wrote his *Tarikh* in the 1570s, observes:

چنانچه زیارت گاه تمام خلق الله است و کرامات حضرت شیخ اظهر من الشمس است۔
کلام موثر ایشان در هر دل جا کنده است۔

[(Nuruddin's shrine) is the centre of pilgrimage for all the creatures of Allah and his miracles are there for everyone to see. His potent compositions have carved out a place of their own in every heart.] [11]

The importance of the shrine can further be gleaned from the fact that Saiyid Ali was himself a descendent of the Kubrawi Saiyid, Tajuddin. [12] Another important early source of the 16th century evidences the importance of the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin. Mulla Ali Raina writes that before being enrolled as

the disciple of Shaikh Hamza, he was advised by the *murshid* to pay a visit to the shrine of Nuruddin. Ali Raina on reaching Tsrar-i-Sharif meditated for the whole night at the tomb. He also recited the surah Yasin there and had a vision of 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir. He writes in his *Tadhkira* that the 'Alamdar advised him to offer some donation (*bakshish*) to the custodian of the shrine. [13]

It is, therefore, evident that both the Kubrawis and the Suharwardis played a strong role in highlighting the importance of the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi. Significantly, Mulla Ali Raina legitimized the practice of making offerings at the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin. His act was exemplary. That is why the offerings were made by the devotees out of their own will not only at the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin but also at several other shrines. This fact not only enabled the custodians of the shrine to sustain themselves but in due course it also created necessary conditions for the maintenance of the shrine. It is noteworthy that in the traditional peasant society, every villager made it a point to keep some portion of produce for necessary upkeep of the shrine.[14]

HISTORICAL REASONS FOR THE VENERATION OF TSRAR

Behind the historical importance of the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi are several factors_ social, cultural, economic, and political, in addition to the religious one. The interplay of such factors has not merely led a multitude of men and women to venerate the shrine but the conjucture of varied circumstances has produced a particular consciousness among the Kashmiris with regard to the shrine. This consciousness may certainly be designated as Kashmiri. Basically, the two main sources of this consciousness are the titles bestowed on Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi by the Kashmiris viz. 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir, and Shaikh-ul-Alam. Although several leading Sufis of Kashmir were known by various titles, their purport was either mystical or they signified several lofty religious attainments of the Sufis. The Kashmiris have always remembered Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi by the two titles under reference. Even now modern colonies that have sprung up in different parts of cities and towns have been named 'Alamdar or Shaikh-ul-Alam. This uninterrupted

link between Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi and the Kashmiris of today cannot merely be described in terms of religious factor but more importantly such a phenomenon points to the robustness of the particular as well as universalistic message of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi.

What is particular about the role of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi is his image of an exalted Rishi in the consciousness of both the Kashmiri Muslims and the Kashmiri Hindus. For Kashmiri Muslims he is 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir, or the upholder of the banner of Kashmir. The Kashmiri Pandits have never disputed the legitimacy of the title conferred on him by the Kashmiri Muslims, yet they have remembered the Sufi as Nund Rishi (Nund meaning the pious one). [15]

The two titles are complimentary, though Nund was the name that his parents used out of love for their child. In his numerous verses, Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi calls himself Nund rather Nuruddin. So 'Alamdar and Nund are not mere titles or names but concepts. These concepts are based in the consciousness of Kashmiris that has evolved over centuries of ideological differences and reconciliation. Such a consciousness may be termed purely Kashmiri, though moulded by the challenge of Islam and the response that it evoked at the societal level over centuries of Islamic acculturation. It is remarkable that the Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits have never quarreled over their differing religious beliefs. Tsrar-i-Sharif was not the centre of pilgrimage for Kashmiri Muslims alone but for a sizeable number of Kashmiri Pandits as well. An interview of this researcher with some old men revealed that before the onset of militancy in Kashmir, Pandit devotees of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi would also keep themselves awake for the whole night at the shrine preceding the day of the death anniversary of the Sufi.

It is not the mere presence of Hindus and Muslims at the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi that imparts viability to the concept of Kashmiri identity but the élan vital characterizing the mystical thought of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi. This is proven by his verses marked by the universality of his vision. Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi was an apostle of Hindu- Muslim unity in Kashmir notwithstanding his crusade against Brahmanic rituals, casteism and exploitation.

One needs to look beyond the literal meaning of the word "Alamdar" and probe how Shaikh Nuruddin upheld the banner of Kashmir. Also, in what sense was such a title connected with the social and religious moorings of Kashmiris.

Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi was born at a period of great social and religious crisis in Kashmir. Being a 'spiritual heir' to Lal Ded, he was not oblivious to the historical exigencies that demanded a creative role from a Sufi Shaikh of high spiritual calibre. It is worth remembering that Shaikh Nuruddin was unarguably the first Kashmiri who responded both to the social protests of Lal Ded and the spiritual and social ethics of Islam imaginatively and creatively. [16] The Rishi order founded by him was a happy blending of tenets of Islam and the local religious beliefs. In no case was the Rishi order considered to be a movement antithetical to Islam. This can be assessed from the attitudes of the Naqshbandi, Kubrawi and Suharwardi orders towards the Rishis. Muhammad Ishaq Khan opines that as a result of a meaningful interaction between the Rishis and the Sufis of exogenous orders, "the dynamic tension between Islam and the regional culture found expression in the remarkable assimilation of a variety of elements of the popular culture in Islam." [17]

The fact is that Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi presented Islam as a religion of abiding spiritual, social and moral values to both the Brahmans and commoners in the local dialect through his poetry. His message was clear. It was addressed to all. He came in contact with his compatriots belonging to various sections of the Kashmiri society. During his conversations with the Brahmans neither did he mince words about the evils of casteism nor fail to condemn the ritualistic practices the Brahmans had evolved to exploit the masses. Moreover, Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi made not only the Brahmans and the folk aware of the evils of casteism but also the dignity of labour. This is the reason why men and women coming within the fold of Rishi order steered clear of religious fanaticism. No less important is the fact that the Kashmiri Brahmans who stuck to their religion did not allow any kind of hatred to enter their mind. Islam and Hinduism and even Buddhism converged.

While Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits followed different ways, their basic idea was in many ways the same. This can be inferred from the latter day images of Shaikh Nuruddin. It is a

fact that the contemporary Brahman chroniclers remained silent about Nuruddin mainly because of their caste prejudices. But the latter day Pandits eulogized and thought highly of Nuruddin as an earnest seeker after the Truth. Shaikh Nuruddin's emphasis on *Tawhid* was strongly echoed by Mirza Kak, a Pandit mystic belonging to Hangalgund, in his poetry. More significantly, Kati Pandit, a Brahman well versed in *shastras* popularised Nuruddin's poetry among the people during the Shaikh's lifetime. Thus a creative link between Hinduism and Islam was clearly established without distorting the real message of Islam.

Seen from the above perspective, the title of 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir was in harmony with the spirit of the time. Shaikh Nuruddin and a host of his Rishi followers proved themselves to be true embodiments of religious and social stability in Kashmir for several centuries in spite of the political upheavals that Kashmir witnessed from time to time.

Another reason behind the popularity of Shaikh Nuruddin is connected with the title Shaikh-ul-Alam or the spiritual leader of the world. This title is laden with profound meaning. Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi first mentioned the title. It is intriguing that Saiyid Ali Hamadani was given the title of Shah-i-Hamadan and not Shaikh-ul-Alam. The reason may be that the Rishi order founded by Shaikh Nuruddin arose as a spiritual and social movement of great historical significance in Kashmir in response to the teachings of Saiyid Ali Hamadani and his son Saiyid Muhammad Hamadani. This fact apart, the role played by the Kubrawis in lending a unique identity to the shrine of Tsrar-i-Sharif needs to be highlighted. Thus, as already stated, the procession that was taken out in the city during the time of natural calamities, started at the shrine of Shah-i-Hamadan. It was the *imam* of the mosque of Shah-i-Hamadan who along with other custodians of the shrine led the procession to Tsrar-i-Sharif. It is noteworthy that the banner (*alam*) was taken from the shrine of Shah-i-Hamadan Saiyid Ali Hamadani and carried to Tsrar. This event had both historic and symbolic significance.

First, as per the *khat-i-irshad* preserved in the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla, Shaikh Nuruddin was considered to be a disciple of Saiyid Muhammad Hamadani. However, this fact did not lessen his role as both the upholder of Islam and Kashmiri identity.

The Kubrawis considered Saiyid Muhammad Hamadani's act of granting discipleship (at Shaikh Nuruddin's request) to Nuruddin to be only of symbolic importance. This is corroborated by the fact that they always regarded Nuruddin as a true spiritual leader of the Kashmiris. But for his estimation featuring their writings [18] as well as their social action, the shrine of Nuruddin would not have emerged as an important centre of pilgrimage for the Kashmiris.

Another significant fact about the procession was that it promoted solidarity and community consciousness. It can be seen in the coming together of Kashmiri Muslims belonging to various strata of the society. This social fact that has not been examined before needs to be highlighted in view of its varied dimensions.

The fact that Kashmiri Muslims even at the instance of their Hindu rulers [19] undertook *Nafl* processions is worthy of notice. It is difficult to trace the history of *Nafl* procession and the earliest references regarding such events are found in the diaries of Mirza Saifuddin. Though from the Islamic point of view, prayers known as *istisqa* [20] can be offered in congregation during the period of distress, taking out of a procession by Kashmiri Muslims carrying banners of the Sufis on such occasions adds a distinctive feature to Islam in the regional context.

A DAY IN THE DEVOTEE'S LIFE AT TSRAR

Thousands of pilgrims come in homage daily at the tomb of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi and several memorials scattered all over the Valley. They make offerings not only at Tsrar but also at these commemorative places.

On Thursdays, especially, people assemble at the tomb of Shaikh Nuruddin. These gatherings on Thursdays at Tsrar, also called Tsrar Breswar, have become a 'theme of our folk literature'.[21]

Az che breswar
Walai veis gatsav Tsrar

I have noted three types of devotees at the shrine of Tsrar. A large majority of such devotees comprises men and

women who visit the shrine with manifold purposes. Before entering the premises of the tomb, ablution is carried out. The fervent devotees give a deep bow to the place where the Sufi is entombed. After offering the *fatiha*, they invoke the help of Allah or in most cases the intercession (*wasalat*) of Shaikh Nuruddin is sought for the redressal of the worldly matters like job, business, suitable match, success in examination etc. A number of times I observed people holding children in their arms touch the wooden trellis round the tomb and then with the same hand caress their children several times on the face. At Tsrar, people present velvette or silken coverings for the tombs of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi or his entourage who have been laid to rest beside him.

Another important feature of the day to day life at the shrine of Tsrar, like elsewhere, is the intonation of *manqabat* aloud. But when the time is to offer ordained prayers, all prostrate before the K'aba. The group recitals of *durud*, *manqabat*, *n'at* etc. resume after the congregational prayers. Sometimes, a devotee, the moment he enters the premises of the shrine, after paying homage to the Sufi, starts intoning *manqabat* in Kashmiri in praise of the social and spiritual feat of Shaikh Nuruddin. This devotee often prompts several others to join him. This collective reading of *manqabat* has almost become a regular scene at the shrine. The ritual act does not simply intend to glorify the attainments of the Sufi but reassert his identity as Kashmiri Muslim (Koshur Musalman). From the Islamic viewpoint, a Muslim is essentially a constituent of the *ummah*. But from the sociological and historical angle, he is a component of the *ummah* as a Muslim (individual) who cannot transcend his historical and social context. So the point is, not Islam as a monolithic entity but a religion that encourages plurality of social and cultural identities. To quote the Qur'an: "We have created you unto tribes so that you may understand each other."

DEVOTIONAL ASPECT

The bond that unites the Kashmiris and Tsrar apart from being close is really special. It imparts a distinct feature to the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin that has its basis in our tradition. This may be the reason why everywhere I found immense love

for the Sufi. He commands reverence among the elderly as well as the young. Some of the devotees regard him as the upholder of the banner of Kashmir ('Alamdar-i-Kashmir) while others the standard-bearer of Islam in the Valley.

It is not only at Tsrar, the place where Shaikh Nuruddin is entombed, that one finds his devotees but also at the place where he spent his childhood [22] and several other places connected with his life. These places are commemorated by *Khanqah*s. They have become objects of deep veneration by the Muslims who frequent them in great numbers from all parts of the Valley. Even the stone on which he sat or the tree he took shelter under have become objects of veneration. A pilgrim may go to the cave where 'Alamdar dwelt. A devotee may visit the place where 'Alamdar meditated, now marked by a *Khanqah*.

Most of the rituals [23] that have evolved over centuries at the Tsrar-i-Sharif are not of Islamic but local origin. Here an attempt is made to understand the importance of these rituals in the local and regional sense. What follows is merely based on my interviews and close observation of the social phenomenon.

In the traditional Kashmiri society, as of now, a large number of families deem it necessary to pay obeisance to Shaikh Nuruddin at least once a year. The visit was (and is) not necessarily connected with the *'urs*. A visit to the shrine must be paid at any time of the year. Not only is he the standard-bearer of Kashmiri identity but also the spiritual master par excellence whose words of wisdom are inspirational. Thus the reverence evolved for Shaikh Nuruddin cannot be labeled superstition but internalization of basic values like honesty, correctness of behaviour, cleanliness of environment etc. His sayings have further cemented the bonds of the people with the shrine. At no point does he sound preachy. He was an interlocutor of wonderful disposition. He traversed the Valley and wherever he went, he conversed with people. His conversations lie in perpetuity in the memory of his fervent devotees and their influence still lingers. All the sayings are not of religious nature. Some are related to the environment while others stress the dignity of labour and cultivation of crops. The peasants especially remember the latter ones. May be this is the reason why they make it a point to visit the shrine at least once a year. The visit is not merely having social importance neither is it an occasion of amusement. This annual sincere act

of thanksgiving has become somewhat ritualistic. It is an expression of reverence. Shaikh Nuruddin was and is a highly exalted spiritual personality. So visits to his shrine have taken a form of procedure regularly followed throughout the year in precisely the same manner each time.

Significantly, at no stage of my empirical study at Tsrar did the researcher find devotees making Shaikh Nuruddin an object of worship. Questions were posed particularly to the illiterate devotees from lower rungs of the Kashmiri society like artisans, landless labourers, scavengers and so on whether they worshipped Allah or the Sufi. The answer was unanimous and spontaneous: "Allah alone is worthy of worship". And when asked as to why they call Shaikh Nuruddin for help, the reasoning behind this was that in everyday affairs people ask for each other's help. So it was not a sin or *shirk* to seek the help of 'Alamdar. "He is alive_ not physically but spiritually. He listens to us. He has given meaning to our existense." Again, the devotees were asked if their invocation of the spirit of the Sufi amounted to *shirk* as it was like the Hindu practice of praying to countless devotees. An elderly woman retorted: "We seek the blessings and help of the 'Alamdar who believed in one God and not multiple gods. What is the harm in doing so for our association with 'Alamdar brings us closer to Allah." The answer put my doubts to rest. The fact is that devotees have set their own parameters for determining the extent of their faith. The final outcome of such reasoning is that we need to explore and understand several distinctive aspects of Muslim life at the shrines in an open historical, social and religious perspective.

FESTIVAL AT TSRAR

Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi's annual *'urs* is a venerable day for the people who regard his teachings as a great source of inspiration. Festivities mark this day. Not only does Tsrar wear a festive look on the occasion of *'urs* but also the commemorative places like Kaimoh, Gophbal, Tsimar, Honstipura etc. Wayfarers journey long distances to these places as act of devotion. It is an occasion that brings together people of different communities. Children feel as if they are on a picnic what with an array of choicest food and toys on display. The daintily decorated shrine fascinates the young minds too. For their

parents it is a day of mixing worship with pleasure. It is a day of taking a break from the routine of everyday life. Though all the commemorative places are decorated, Tsrar, the place where Shaikh Nuruddin is entombed, has the largest number of devotees. Pilgrims start arriving in huge numbers on the preceding day itself to participate in nightlong recitals (*shab*), taking advantage of the gazetted holiday that follows.

Unlike the *'urs* celebrations at the Kubrawi, Suharwardi and Naqshbandi shrines, the ones (*'urs* celebrations) at Tsrar-i-Sharif are quite different. The *'urs* celebrations at Tsrar, like the former shrines, are also marked by emphasis on the recitation of *zikr*, *Awrad*, *manqabat*, *durud*, and *Khatmat*. But what distinguishes Tsrar from such shrines is the singing of *wanwun* (folk songs) by women for several days. The importance of studying oral tradition, collective memoirs, cultural artifacts, and folklore etc., emphasized by the Subaltern School of History is brought home to the researcher on such festive occasions. Here an attempt has been made to highlight some significant social and religious dimensions of the festival at Tsrar.

The precincts of the *Khanqah* are filled with the sound of *wanwun* singing women. Scores of women can be spotted singing *wanwun* during the festive days of the festival at Tsrar. A group of women belonging to nearby villages and sometimes far off places sit for hours at full stretch and sing folk songs. First an elderly woman says a verse of a song in a low voice and the rest follow. The group occupies a place just outside the main door of the shrine. It appears to be oblivious to what is going inside the shrine in the form of *durud*, *manqabat*, *nafl* prayers etc. The songs are sung during the intervals of the prescribed prayers. But sometimes the women carry on with their singing even at night.

In Dakhni-speaking villages of the Deccan plateau, women sung folk poetry while doing various household chores. The most common types included the *chakki-nama*, so called because it was sung while grinding food grains at the grindstone or *chakki*, and the *charkha-nama*, sung while spinning thread at the spinning wheel, or *charkha*. [24] Amazingly, the central theme of the folk songs sung at Bijapur etc. and the ones (*wanwun*) at Kashmir is the same_ establishment of an ontological link between Allah, and the

Prophet (SAW), one's own pir, and the singer herself. While women in Kashmir sing songs at the shrine precincts, in Bijapur the same is done but within the confines of one's home. Thus it appears that when it comes to singing of folk songs, Muslim women of Kashmir enjoy a greater degree of freedom as compared to their counterparts elsewhere.

Several folk songs were sung but here I will discuss only three because of their importance not as ritualistic acts but being medium through which spiritual and ethical values have been inculcated among the women folk. The tradition of expressing admiration for Shaikh Nuruddin has in a way been immortalized.

For women devotees, 'Alamdar is a spiritually exalted personality whose light has turned them ecstatic:

Nuras cheinis eis heiz gai maeiti
Latiye ais vyan dedar hav

The deep yearning (*shouq*) of a woman devotee drives her to the court (*darbar*) of 'Alamdar:

Shouq chaney waeitis choun darbar

Women who cannot afford to perform the *hajj* fancy reaching Mecca and Medina through the court (*darbar*) of 'Alamdar. This may sound blasphemous but the devotees concur that they do not compare the shrine with Mecca and Medina. For them 'Alamdar is the light and they yearn for inner enlightenment through a spiritual guide alone.

Mecca ti Medina sorie yetiyey
Tsiyi chuk 'Alamdar-i-Kashmir

The kind of relationship that has worked out gradually between a devotee and the 'Alamdar is of the lover and beloved. The women devotees call the 'Alamdar a chum (*latiye*):

Halam daeirith pyaran yeitiyey
Latiye ais vyan dedar hav

Since the 'Alamdar has received inner light from the Prophet (SAW), the devotees hope that as 'Alamdar he will also take care of them in this world and the Hereafter. They feel having been entrusted to his care.

The banner (*'alam*) of Kashmir is further expounded in the folk songs as the banner of Grace or *Rahmatuk 'alam*.

Such is the image of Shaikh Nuruddin in the folk songs that the devotees continue seeking his blessings. Symbolically, they extend an invitation to their beloved to grace the occasion of *'urs* at Tsrar by his spiritual presence. It is their intense wish to spread rose petals on the path he might tread.

The imagery and metaphors used in explaining the deepest spiritual truth is remarkable. Shaikh Nuruddin is likened to a beautiful lotus (*pamposh*) or rose (*gulab*) who stirs the seekers of truth with divine knowledge. But only those who feel great longing for seeing their beloved can understand this knowledge.

Interestingly, it is not Shaikh Nuruddin alone who is eulogized in the folk songs at Tsrar by women devotees. Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani is also remembered. The idea is to form a spiritual relationship between the great Sufi of Baghdad and that of Kashmir.

Another folk song sung with enthusiastic devotion on the event of *'urs* at Tsrar dispels any doubts regarding the ostensible dichotomy between the so-called 'folk' Islam and the 'official' or 'orthodox' Islam. The theme of the song is to pay tributes to Shaikh Nuruddin as a great spiritual leader of Islam. That is why women seek his blessings in these verses: [25]

We are fluttering *Ama Siparah*
O master! Pay heed and open the windows
Today the entire world will be enlightened
Bow every moment before thy Lord

After showering praise on the Prophet (SAW) and Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, women devotees revert back to their main theme that reflects their love for Shaikh Nuruddin. The following verse is repeated over a dozen times:

Khurshid 'Alam soun sardar
(Our leader is the Sun of the Universe)

The song then narrates the birth of Shaikh Nuruddin in the home of Shaikh Salar, his reluctance to suckle milk till Lai Ded made an acquaintance etc. These events from his life are versified against the local backdrop. His being *wali* was preordained, something innate, a specified natural quality he was bestowed with. He recalled the name of Allah while still in the womb of his mother Zae Ded.

Another song is in praise of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and earnestly requests the believers to recite *durud* constantly. In this song a girl is likened to a loving sparrow that is taught to offer benedictions to the beloved Prophet (SAW). The song then refers to the *kalima* or confession of faith that was first affirmed by the Prophet (SAW). It is portrayed as the source of all knowledge.

Thus it is through these folk songs of yore that Kashmiri women have not only preserved this peculiar spiritual heritage of Islam in Kashmir but also invigorated their faith in the fundamentals of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

BABA ZAINUDDIN WALI

Shaikh Zainuddin Wali, the illustrious disciple of Alamdar-i-Kashmir Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, was born in Banderkot, Kishtwar in Doda district. Once as a child Shaikh Zainuddin took seriously ill. His mother was inconsolable. While she was weeping bitterly, all of a sudden, a person with a radiant countenance appeared before her. He promised to cure the sick child (through his spiritual power) on the condition that she would bring him to Kashmir as soon as he regained health and got back to normal. But the mother, over a period of time, forgot the promise. Soon, her child was taken ill again. This time, however, she knew the reason. She was reminded of her unfulfilled promise and without any delay proceeded to Kashmir along with her son.

The person who had appeared before the lady and cured her son was none other than Shaikh Nuruddin himself. Once in Kashmir she recognized the Alamdar at the first sight as the one who had visited her at Kishtwar and mitigated her

suffering. No sooner did she have an audience with Shaikh Nuruddin than she embraced Islam. The Alamdar named the child as Shaikh Zainuddin who later became his favourite disciple.

The great Sufi Baba Zainuddin Wali passed away in 852 A. H. / 1448 A. D. Though the shrine at Aishmuqam is visited by scores of people throughout the year, mystery surrounds his actual burial place. Some point to the presence of two tombs at the shrine premises both belonging to Baba Zainuddin. Yet others contend that he is entombed in Tibet.

The word has it that when Baba Zainuddin breathed his last, his disciples brought the coffin for burial of the body. But they were astounded to find it empty and left the place in sheer desperation. However, the same night, one of the disciples saw Baba Zainuddin in his dream. The Sufi asked him to raise a mausoleum at the very place where the coffin was placed.[26]

THE BLESSING SEEKERS

An earnest wish at the shrine of Baba Zainuddin Wali, people say, is usually granted. As such, pilgrims visit the shrine in droves, several hundreds every day of the week. The pilgrims comprise people from all walks of life though there is a myth that whosoever belongs to the so-called low caste community (*dum, watal* etc.) must not enter the shrine premises or else he/she will die or never prosper. This class of people, however, has never paid heed to this myth and continues paying homage to their beloved Sufi. Interestingly, they are the ones who throng the shrine at any given time and day in exceedingly large numbers. The shrine is inclusive for men and women of all ages in that people from other faiths are allowed entry. Like elsewhere, here too, Hindus and Sikhs may be spotted paying obeisance to the Sufi.

THE ANNUAL FESTIVAL

The shrine [27] of Shaikh Zainuddin Wali lies at the holy township of Aishmuqam [28] at Anantnag district of south Kashmir.

The annual festival at the shrine of Baba Zainuddin marks the beginning of agricultural activities of the cultivators. The

cultivators belonging to the southern part of Kashmir consider it auspicious to plough their fields only after paying obeisance at the shrine. Though people from all parts of the Valley visit the shrine at Aishmuqam, it is people from nearby areas and the Sufi's birth-place Kishtawar who form the majority. At present the *'urs* is observed according to the peasant calendar marking the beginning of agricultural season. The logic behind postponing the *'urs* date was to cater to the economic interests of several classes of people. It is especially the farming community that participates in exceedingly large numbers in the festivities connected with the annual festival in memory of Shaikh Zainuddin Wali. They are the ones who hold torches at sunset commemorating the victory of the good over the evil.

The *'urs* celebrations at the shrine of Baba Zainuddin last for a period of five days during which people living nearby abstain from eating meat. Night long religious assemblages are held a day prior to *'urs* at the shrine. The area witnesses extraordinary rush of pilgrims especially at the time of offering the prescribed prayers. Men and women gather to offer the prayers in congregation. Apart from religious activities, the area reverberates to the sonorous rythms of traditional musical instruments played by folk singers. One of the major highlights is the traditional dance called *dambael* performed by Kashmiri folk dancers or *dambael maeit*. They fill the festival up further with their kaleidoscopic performances.

The festive spirit among the devotees is palpable. The annual festival comes alive when vendors set up their stalls and people rush to buy their wares. The vendors and petty shopkeepers do brisk business. The open-air market is a true reflection of our traditional culture. One may spot earthenware, wooden and wicker work objects of different kinds. Since women comprise a sizeable chunk of devotees, markets cater to their needs too. That must be the reason why vendors selling combs, mirrors, artificial jewellery and other accessories can be found almost everywhere. Children buy clay toys. Some are seen munching a variety of eatables on display. And giving fillip to these festivities, as already mentioned, are the performances of the traditional folk artists. The annual *'urs* at the shrine of Baba Zainuddin represents this part of the Valley in all its cultural glory.

THE *FROVE*

The shrine of a Rishi is the pivot of cultural activities that can well be translated as people's devotion. One such important cultural event in the lives of the people of Kashmir, the south in particular [29] , is the torchlight procession known as *frove* in local parlance.

Though the *frove* belongs to the people of Kashmir, the term is laden with pronounced cultural implication and is significant for the study of bi-lateral relations between Zoroastrian Iran and Kashmir. [30]

The *frove* is celebrated according to the availability of peasants i.e. in the month they would be relatively free from agricultural occupations. The torchlight procession symbolizes the victory of the good over the evil. It is taken out by people from villages surrounding the shrine of Baba Zainuddin Wali. It is at sunset that one beholds a breathtakingly beautiful sight of villagers carrying blaze torches against the usually windy picturesque backdrop of cloud laden mountains and bellowing wild trees. People of all age groups assemble at the nearest open space available in the immediate vicinity of the shrine of Baba Zainuddin to light the torches called *laisch* in Kashmiri. Significantly, women do not lag behind and are seen participating in the *frove* ceremony in large numbers along with their male counterparts. Chips of pine wood or some other sort that would catch fire easily are neatly arranged round a thick willow stick. People hold them aloft and cry aloud_ *Zain Shah Saeibun zool ha* or Zain Shah Saheb's illuminations!

According to a popular anecdote, Baba Zainuddin went to Aishmuqam on the command of his spiritual guide Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi. At Aishmuqam he chose a secluded spot near a cave perched on a hillock. The cave was infested with poisonous snakes, creatures hostile to human beings and a monster. Baba Zainuddin fought with the cave occupant and the reptiles vacated the place for him to meditate.[31] Hence on each festival at the shrine of Baba Zainuddin in Aishmuqam a torchlight procession signifying the triumph of the good over the evil is carried out by Kashmiris from nearby villages.

There are three aspects of *frove_* moral, cultural and religious. The moral aspect is seen in the joyous affirmation of the victory of the good forces over the evil ones. The cultural

aspect is witnessed when the shrine's courtyard comes alive with performances of the folk musicians and dancers. The *frove* has a religious side to it too. The day of *frove* celebrations, besides the ordained five prayers, sees the recitation of Quranic verses, *khatmat*, and poetic verses having religious orientation.

REASONS FOR THE DEFERRAL OF *'URS* DATE

The spring signals the end of harsh winter. Hence celebrations follow. For the farmers it heralds the time for thanksgiving and seeking blessings for another successful year ahead. The devout, the majority comprising the farmers, visit the shrines in thousands. The markets remain crowded and the shrines remain in the grip of festivity.

The reasons, therefore, for postponing the *'urs* date at the shrines of Baba Zainuddin Wali, Baba Hardi Rishi and Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi in Aishmuqam, Anantnag and Bijbehara respectively though manifold are mostly economic. Not long ago, the annual fair at these places was celebrated twice with slight variations from place to place. It was celebrated according to the Kashmiri calendar. But now it is celebrated on a fixed date in the spring.

The main reason for switching the date was the peasant's preoccupation with the harvest. They formed the majority of pilgrims. The annual *'urs* fell at the time of the year when peasants were busy with harvesting grains. Consequently, there would be a reduction in number of pilgrims to the shrine. Most significantly, the *mujawir* etc. associated with the shrine incurred heavy losses in their income as a substantial chunk of it would be yielded from the offerings made by the visitors to the shrine, specially the peasants. So it was decided to defer the date of annual *'urs* in the economic interests, particularly the economic one, of all those associated with the shrine directly or indirectly.

Another major contributory factor was the losses suffered by street vendors selling fruits, vegetables, earthernware, wickerwork items, spices, cloth, blankets, woolen garments, wooden utensils, souvenir etc. in the area surrounding the shrine. Crowds of vendors set up their stalls in the shrine

precincts and by mid-morning they would be ready to sell their wares.

Another factor leading to the deferral of *'urs* date was the losses experienced by the folk artists who performed to entertain crowds of pilgrims gathered at the shrine complex on *'urs* eve. The ones doing daredevil stunts also got a chance to earn through the exhibition of their skills. The performing arts were the major attraction at intervals between the prescribed prayers. So the pilgrim's or rather peasant's absence meant a substantial loss of income. The folk artists earned their livelihood from performing infront of crowds of peasants throughout the period of *'urs* celebrations. Hence their interests were taken into account too.

Yet another class affected by the peasant's absence was the one that got its livelihood from alms.

Finally, keeping in view the interests of several classes of people, there was a consensus among those involved with shrine activities on deferring the *'urs* date. The plan intended to reduce the shrine income deficit too. Accordingly, fifteen days (five days reserved for each *'urs* at the three places mentioned) were chosen as the favourable and convenient period for celebrating the annual *'urs*. Since then *'urs* is observed on the day fixed according to the availability of peasants. In the spring the peasants are free to enjoy, the weather is fine too thereby ensuring maximum participation of pilgrims in the *'urs* celebrations.

ITINERANT FOLK ARTISTS ON *'URS* EVE

After a hiatus caused by the severe winter, folk dancers and musicians (*bhand*) hailing from a place called Mohorpora flock to the places where a large number of people are expected to assemble. In order to eke out a living they entertain crowds by dancing, singing, acting or playing music. The journey includes visit to several shrines too. At funfairs they perform solely to earn their livelihood. But paying a visit to shrines is commemorative. The intent is not only to perform in front of a large audience but foremost is the act of paying homage. Blessings of the Sufis are sought before starting out on work after the long wintry break.

The folk artists travel barefoot from one place to another. The journey from (the funfair at) Akingam to (the shrine at) Bijbehara takes several days. It is broken at (the funfair at) Acchabal, (the shrine at) Aishmuqam, (the shrine at) Anantnag before finally traveling on to Bijbehara. So the band's first stop is at the fairground in Akingam, second at the fairground in Acchabal, third at the annual *'urs* of Baba Zainuddin at Aishmuqam, fourth at the *'urs* of Baba Hardi Rishi at Anantnag and finally they stop at the *'urs* in the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi, Bijbehara.

The *'urs* festivities at the three shrines last five days each. The *bhands* walking barefoot from Acchabal arrive at the shrine of Baba Zainuddin in Aishmuqam in the afternoon on the day of *'urs*. In fact, the *'urs* itself commences in the afternoon. The celebrations go on for five days thereby ending on the fifth day at noon. The *bhands* wind up at noon and start making preparations for their journey to the shrine of Baba Hardi Rishi at Anantnag. The *bhands* reach the place, a short distance away, in the afternoon at the commencement of *'urs* ceremony. They leave the place on the fifth day at noon and proceed to the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi at Bijbehara. They arrive at the shrine in the afternoon at the start of *'urs* celebrations. Again, the same pattern is followed till the noon falling on the fifth and the last day of *'urs*. Finally the *bhands* leave the shrine premises expecting a good year ahead professionally and in the hope of seeking the Sufis' blessings next year in the spring with same gusto.

Thus on completion of the *'urs* ceremony at the shrine in Aishmuqam, *'urs* celebrations at the shrine in Anantnag commence, followed by the *'urs* festivities at the shrine in Bijbehara. As already mentioned, the celebrations at the shrines last five days each i.e. a total of fifteen days at three different places. The *bhands* during this period give performances at a stretch. They arrive in the afternoon, leave at noon on the fifth day and are on their way to another place reaching there yet again in the afternoon. The *bhands* have fixed their own itinerary in such a way that they are at the right places at the right time.

RISHI MOUL

The most important shrine in the district of Anantnag (Islamabad) is that of Rishi Moul. Actually named Hardi, the Sufi is mentioned as Baba Hardi Rishi in all Persian sources. [32] However, he is popularly known as Rishi Moul or 'Rishi the father'. It may be asked why he is called so. One reason may be the position of eminence he enjoyed in various Sufi circles of his time, particularly the Suharwardi order. It has been stated [33] that once Shaikh Hamza Makhdum decided to go to Hardi Rishi's place with the purpose of enlisting him as his disciple. Hardi Rishi got a clandestine understanding of Shaikh Hamza's arrival and hence started making preparations. Despite Hardi Rishi's repulsion to injure any living creature, an animal was slaughtered as a special treat. When this non-vegetarian fare was offered to Shaikh Hamza, the illustrious guest asked the host to take a portion of it. Hardi Rishi obliged. In fact, this was that one single time in his life when Hardi Rishi ate non-vegetarian food.

Significantly, Shaikh Hamza gave Hardi Rishi the sanction to practice vegetarianism for the rest of his life. This act of the Shaikh dissipates the false belief that the Suharwardis detested vegetarianism of the Rishis in view of its local origin.[34] This event certainly enhanced the prestige of Baba Hardi amongst his contemporaries. Also, considering the legitimacy granted by the Suharwardi Sufi to the vegetarianism of the Rishis, Baba Hardi came to be regarded as the one who revitalized the Rishi tradition within the framework of the *Sunnah*.

In addition to this fact, Baba Hardi's own role contributed a great deal to his popularity. He himself cultivated land and thereby emphasized the importance of agricultural labour among his followers.

Another factor that must have contributed to the popularity of Hardi Rishi in medieval Kashmir was his close association with Baba Dawud Khaki, the most prominent *khalifa* of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum. Dawud Khaki has praised the spiritual attainments of Hardi Rishi lavishly in his *Qasid-i-Lamiya*, which in its extended form is known as *Rishinama*. He was well known in Sufi circles for his scholarly works and also as one of the most influential Suharwardi Sufis. This is the

reason that Hardi Rishi gained popularity among both the elite and the commoners.

Moreover, Hasan Qari, Haidar Tulmuli and Ishaq Qari have spoken favourably about Hardi Rishi. Haidar Tulmuli goes to the extent of calling Hardi Rishi the king of saints (*sultān al-auliya*).[35] Even accomplished Sufis are said to have taken formal instructions from Hardi Rishi in *suluk* (way of the Sufi). It is stated that many people from Hindustan and some distant lands swarmed round Hardi Rishi soliciting his discipleship. Haidar Tulmuli makes mention of four *darwishes* of Hind who became members of the Rishi order on seeing Hardi Rishi.

The shrine of Rishi Moul is situated in the main town of Anantnag. Unlike many shrines of the Rishis situated in the midst of natural surroundings, the shrine of Rishi Moul is located near one of the busy markets of the town. This fact lends a somewhat unique dimension to the personality of Rishi Moul. Although a Rishi and a vegetarian to the core, he lived among the people and carried on the mission of ennobling the human souls in accordance with the principles of the *Sunnah* and the *tariqa*. Rishi Moul's thoughts, therefore, represent a happy blending of *Shari'ah* and Sufism. He strictly followed the *Sunnah* and as a result of his association with Suharwardi Sufis, he regularly organized the assemblies of *zikr*. The most popular *zikr* recited at his residence was *Awrad-i-Fathhiya*. The recitation of *zikr*, though emphasized in the poetry of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi never got so much importance in the Rishi order until the advent of Rishi Moul. We do not hear of the religious assemblies organized in the early phase of the Rishi movement where *zikr* was recited loudly. It is clear that during the time of Rishi Moul, Islam seems to have gained a firm foothold in Anantnag, the town that along with its environs was once an important religious centre of Kashmiri Brahmans. Rishi Moul's main contribution lies not in undermining the strength of Brahmanism but in building the bridges of understanding between Hinduism and Islam. This is illustrated by the fact that his anniversary was observed until recently by the Kashmiri Pandits of the town with traditional gaiety. Rishi Moul's contribution to popularizing the teachings of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi was enormous. Most significantly, the manner in which he imparted such teachings to the commoners did not create ideological barriers between the Kashmiri Pandits and the

Kashmiri Muslims. The cardinal principle of his teachings was tolerance. The organization of assemblies of *zikr* was targeted at making his followers understand the supreme idea of worshipping Allah in a state of ecstatic love. He did not believe in sermonizing. His piousness was exemplified not only in his ability to draw people belonging to various sections of Kashmiri society to his religious assemblages but also by infusing them with the virtues of labour. This also explains that why he came to be known as the most distinguished Rishi after Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi. Several sources tell us that Shaikh Nuruddin had predicted about the advent of Hard Rishi a hundred years ago. [36] This piece of evidence actually points to the greatness of Baba Hardi.

Even after being initiated into the Suharwardi order by Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, Hardi Rishi continued to live as a Rishi. This is evident from the fact that Shaikh Hamza allowed Hardi Rishi to follow the principles of the Rishi order. Miram Bazaz clearly writes that Shaikh Hamza advised Hardi Rishi not to eat meat and follow the way of Rishis. What further led to his popularity was the honour conferred on him by the great Suharwardi Sufi Shaikh Hamza who imparted a broader social deference and veracity to the Rishi movement by presenting his cap (kulah) and turban (amama) to Hardi Rishi. [37] The sublime conduct of the famed Suharwardi Sufi towards him gave a stimulus to both the Rishis and the Suharwardis for perfecting the process of Islamic acculturation of the masses within the bounds of the spiritual and legal structure of Islam. [38]

THE SHRINE COMPLEX

The shrine of Baba Hardi Rishi is a four sided structure. It has been constructed on a 75ft quadrilateral plain. 35ft high walls have been raised on all four sides. The eaves of its roof are made of carved wood. A lofty tower with a spire above is perched on top of its four-tiered pyramidal sloping roof. This distinguishable tower has been modeled on one of the stylistic range of *Khatamband* woodwork. The roof is patterned closely after similar coverings notable on top of other Rishi shrines in the Valley.

Inside the shrine, there is an enclosure where Baba Hardi Rishi and his twenty-one *khulafa* have been interred. The tomb

of this Rishi Sufi is 5½ft high and the rest have been positioned 1ft below.

There is roofed verandah inside the shrine where pilgrims stop for a rest from their exertions. As elsewhere, here too, a special closet has been attached to the shrine. It is 40ft high and 20ft wide.

The ceiling of the shrine is vaulted. Apart from other commonly used materials, plywood has also been used in its construction.

The existing shrine was erected in 1960 A.D. It was constructed keeping in mind its original form.

There is a double storied building inside the compound of the shrine. The first floor houses a library. A small structure lies adjacent to this building. It is empty but people, mostly Pandits, continue to swarm round it. The Pandits were seen praying and asking some *devi* for help. Interviews with people living nearby revealed that the said place, in the distant past, must have held sanctity for the Kahmiri Pandits, hence a continuation of the past practice.

THE ANNUAL *'URS*

On the occasion of *'urs*, pilgrims visit the shrine of Rish Moul in droves though the number exceeds several thousands a day even a week before the main event. The *'urs* celebrations last for five days. During the period religious assemblages are held wherein the verses of the Quran, *durud*, *n'at, munajat* are recited, and the Almighty Allah's names and attributes are recollected. The *shab* or night-long assemblage is held a day prior to the *'urs*. The religious assemblies at the shrine are well attended.

The shrine is frequented by pilgrims of all sorts. On *'urs* eve, particularly, the idea is to seek blessings before starting afresh after the listless life of winter months. The devotees pin all their hopes on their revered Sufi and look forward to success in their respective ventures.

People come with a variety of offerings. The peasants make offerings of reaped crop. The folk artists keep aside, as an offering, a portion of their earnings on the days of *'urs* celebrations. Even otherwise, donations, either in cash or kind, at the shrine have become a routine affair. For example, a

household whose member has recovered after a brief illness through the blessings of the Sufi offers a calf, goat or a sheep. Others donate jewellery, furnishings, clock, prayer mats and other stuff. The offerings in cash are generally meant for the renovation of the shrine. The poor are also fed and taken care of. Sometimes pilgrims in distress make a pledge to make an offering at the shrine or give alms to the poor at the shrine premises. The process of making offerings, in such cases, lingers on till the wishes through the intercession of the Sufi are fulfilled.

Overall *'urs* at the shrine of Rishi Moul is celebrated with ardour. The cultural highlight of the event is the performances of the folk dancers and singers who attract public attention.

BABA RISHI

His real name was Payamuddin. But he is popularly known in the Kashmir Valley as Baba Rishi. He was actually a resident of Chundnu, a village situated on the environs of the city and one of the suburbs of Lar. [39] Endowed worthily with riches, he had a stately bearing. An affluent man, he was among the privy counselors of the Sultan Hasan Shah. He abjured his life of dissipation when, while hunting one day, he saw ants taking grain in their mouth. He dismounted from his horse, and till late night his mind was whirling with what he had observed. He said that ants run about in their quest to gather food stocks for the winter. And we do not make any provisions for the next world? With these lurking thoughts he spurned this world and relinquished all the worldly goods. Thereafter he was in attendance on Shaikh Zainuddin for some time. When he had both feet firmly on the ground, he got the sanction to depart and reflect on spiritual matters in solitude at the mountain of Ranboh in the Baangal sub-district. The dwellers of this place were demons. But they proved to be no match for Baba Rishi when he read the azaan in a resounding high-pitched voice. A majority of demons accepted Islam and thenceforth acted in compliance. Baba Rishi tranquilly spent the rest of his life there and died on 24 Hajj 889 A. H. / 1484 A. D.

THE SHRINE

The shrine of Baba Rishi is situated in picturesque surroundings amidst a pine forest. The medieval chroniclers refer to this place as Ranboh. [40] But now the place is popularly known as Baba Rishi. Curiously enough, this place did not develop as a town despite the rush of pilgrims to it over a long time. This phenomenon, unlike most of the popular shrines, can be described mainly in terms of the sacred geography of the place itself. The location of the shrine continues to be ideal for meditation in its somber environment, free from hustle and bustle of the urban life. One cannot but admire the fortitude of Baba Rishi in resorting to meditative and ascetic practices at a place that, in fact, did not have any social and economic linkages with the neighbouring places. Although some traces of population existed on the outskirts of the forest of Ranboh, there were (still are) no human settlements near the shrine. The only human settlement worth mentioning exists in the form of a mosque, langar, guesthouse and a few shops founded by the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Auqaf in the mid twentieth century. It is interesting that of several hundred Muslim shrines, the Auqaf brought it under its control for several reasons. With the improvement of means of communication and transport after the opening of the Jehlum Valley Road in 1890, Gulmarg, about 5 miles from the Baba Rishi, attracted the attention of the British. Having turned into a famous tourist resort and the best turf for playing golf, it became almost customary for the tourists not only to visit Gulmarg but also the shrine of Baba Rishi. With the passage of time, there was a great rush of pilgrims to the shrine from towns like Sopore, Baramulla, Hajan, and Bandipur and, of course, Srinagar. But this is not to disregard the importance of the shrine of Baba Rishi in the religious life of a great number of Kashmiris. This is the reason why Kashmiri leadership thought it prudent to use the shrine as a ready made platform for propagating its ideology from time to time. Thus evidence is not lacking of Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah' s visit to the shrine of Baba Rishi and the speeches delivered by him on various occasions in the volatile political climate of Kashmir. However, what merits emphasis is that the National Conference leadership used the shrine for popularizing such a model of "mankind" and

"citizenship" as would serve the interests of the State and its ideology of religious pluralism.

The shrine of Baba Rishi, like the other Rishi shrines of Kashmir (Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, Rishi Moul, and Batmalu Sahib), promotes a consciousness that is conducive to the society's submissiveness not merely to the will of Allah but to the State as well. This observation need not be understood as a conclusion considering the times when the leaders of the Plebiscite Front or for that matter the National Conference in opposition, sought to educate the pilgrims on virtues of resistance against the Central and State government respectively.

LIFE AND RITUALS

The life and rituals at the shrine of Baba Rishi are connected with both Islam and the sacred geography of the shrine. The religious geography signifies "that area of human geography which can study the religious contents of human culture in relation to the earth. In other words, religious geography may be described as a branch of learning which investigates the relationship between religious culture and its physical environment. Its scope covers not only the influence of geographical factors on religious notions and practices on the one hand, and of religious factors in shaping the land and viewing its territorial location, on the other, but also the interactions between religions of the world. Perhaps it would be equally appropriate to call this subject by the name of geography of religions. It appears to imply the study of geographical factors in religious life and of religious factors in some aspects of human geography from the standpoint of religion rather than from that of geography. From this standpoint, religious geography may be considered as an aid to the methodology of the comparative study of religions. Cultural geographers and historians of human civilization have been aware of the interactions between cultures and their earthly environment but no systematic writings exist in any considerable quantity on religious geography or geography of religions." [41]

It is not the purpose of my study to compartmentalize religion into two different branches i.e. Islam as the religion

and religious geography as an area of cultural geography. The term Islam can be understood to include all those wholesome elements in human culture that have contributed to the growth of religiousness and piety. In this regard, the concept of Allah and his protégés is central to both religions and religious geography. While Allah is Transcendent, there has always been a desire among the individuals to know Him. This phenomenon is not a matter of mere inner striving but it manifests itself in concrete forms. In the case under reference, Baba Rishi's religious strivings in the solitude of forests offers us an abundant food for thought. By no stretch of the imagination, can one assert that besides the religious factor, there was any other factor that made Baba Rishi spend his life in a place inhabited by wild animals and demons only. This longing of Baba Rishi to recognize Allah in the serene environment of the forest with big pine trees led not only to the spiritual elevation of Baba Rishi, but it also raised his spiritual status among the folk. Consequently, a valuable connection was formed between Islam and the natural environment of the woods. The rituals performed as a mark of respect and loyalty to Baba Rishi, besides the offering of ordained five prayers, at the shrine by devotees since early times conclusively demonstrate this. These include the holding of hallowed gatherings, night long recitals wherein verses of the Quran are read, *durud, manqabat, munajat* and *n'at* are intoned.

There is strong evidence that, in spite of his vegetarianism and asceticism, Baba Rishi did not ignore the basic precepts of religion. That he was punctilious about the observance of five times prayers is shown by the foundation of the mosque in the forest itself. Moreover, he seems to have had deep spiritual ties with the leading Sufis of Kubrawi order of his time, despite his renunciation of the worldly life. For example, we hear of his visits to the abode of Saiyid Kreiri. [42]

THE SHRINE COMPLEX

The shrine of Baba Rishi is a squared-shaped structure that has been raised on an even surface. It measures 18ft on all four sides. It has a solid base as the plinth is composed entirely of stones. Wood, slaked lime and baked bricks have been employed in the rest of its making.

The tomb of Baba Payamuddin is in the centre of the shrine. It lies in the midst of an enclosed verandah. The wooden interior of the mausoleum is intricately carved and very impressive. It is a fine example of Kashmiri latticework. The tomb has a velvette covering draped over it. Some verses of the Qur'an and *n 'at* have been embroidered on it.

A door has been fixed on the southern side of the shrine. Beautiful latticework windows surround the shrine on east, north and west sides. The roof of Baba Rishi's shrine has a pyramidal form. A tower capped with spire has been raised over it. It is very typical of the coverings perched on top of numerous Rishi shrines in Kashmir.

There is a double storied *Khanqah* on the east south side of the shrine. Its entrance is on the southern side. In the ground floor of this *Khanqah*, towards the eastern portion, there is a hamam. In the southern direction of its lawn, there is a conventional handmade clay hearth. Baba Payamuddin is said to have made it. The hearth has been preserved in a walled area. There is a notion prevalent among the Kashmiri women unable to conceive that plastering it all over with mud will make them bear children. Also, women having many daughters plaster it with a belief of giving birth to a son.

Many pilgrims tarry a while in rest houses built on both sides of the shrine complex.

A DAY AT THE SHRINE

The shrine of Baba Rishi remains crowded by the devout throughout the year. It is not only the material want that draws the devotees to the shrine. Several hundreds of pilgrims gather in the shrine complex solely to pay homage to the Sufi. One may spot many devotees making their obeisances to Baba Rishi's tomb. Some even lay prostrate on the area around the tomb enclosure.

Most of the pilgrims throng the shrine in their troubled times. They have firm faith in their Sufi and just invoking his name at his abode works. The believers sacrifice goats at the shrine while otherings make offerings in both cash and kind. For these devotees, Baba Payamuddin is the arbiter of land disputes, saviour of the swindled, rescuer of the helpless and court of appeal for officials protesting unfair treatment at work

place or even a disgruntled job applicant. The sentiment echoed by these devotees of Baba Rishi is so strong that one cannot ignore it even if one is not a believer.

BATMALU SAHEB

As late as 1921-23 Batmalu was a suburb of the Srinagar city. Having been included in the Srinagar Municipality during the closing years of Maharaja Pratap Singh's reign, Batmalu has since become an important part of the city. [44] This thickly populated area and the thriving entrepot of trade in the Valley was an unknown village in medieval times. However, it acquired importance in the socio religious life of the Kashmiris due to the philanthropy of Shaikh Dawud (died 21 Rajab 1070 A. H. /23 March 1660 A. D.).

Actually Shaikh Dawud used to bring salt on his back from Thane and sell the same in Srinagar. He owned a piece of land that he cultivated himself. What first shot this labourer and peasant into prominence was his concern for the poor. It is said that during the time of famine, he raised paddy in his fields. Every day he would carry a large cauldron full of cooked rice, locally called *batta*, to his fields and distribute it among all those people who happened to pass by that side. This noble gesture earned the Shaikh the title *Batamol* or 'father who feeds others with cooked rice.'

There is yet another side to the toiling life of Shaikh Dawud and that is the influence of the Rishi way of life on him. He first sought the guidance of Khwaja Yusuf Katju and, through the latter' s courtesy, later came into contact with Allah Dad Rishi (also known as Ahl Baba), a *khalifa* of Baba Hardi Rishi.

Shaikh Dawud was unlettered yet he made a name for himself among the rich and the poor of Kashmir. He was known for his spirituality as well as social role. It is important to note that two Naqshbandi sources have admired Shaikh Dawud for his spiritual attainments.[45] According to them, he took to cultivation after being highly influenced by one of the *Hadith* of

the Prophet (SAW) suggesting importance of agriculture and labour. [46]

Shaikh Dawud must have also been impressed by the teachings of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, who wanted the *salik* [47] to combine his spiritual strivings with agricultural labour. Also, Baba Hardi Rishi must have also been an inspiration for him through Allah Dad Rishi. Shaikh Dawud earned such a title, as had something to do with the ordinary desires of the commoners. So it is not unusual to have Shaikh Dawud as the more popular Rishi among the toiling masses of the city and suburbs rather than the elite.

In fact, the popular conception of Shaikh Dawud is of a Sufi whose spiritual accomplishments were not lesser than that of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum. Unarguably Makhdum Saheb's towering personality is matchless. But it is said that the popularity of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum owes something to his illustrious *khulafa* who praised his activities to the skies in their *tadhkiras*. In this regard, Shaikh Dawud's *khulafa* were lacking. Instead, his popularity rested solely on solid spiritual and social foundations. This is not only demonstrated by the short biographical sketches of him given by Naqshbandi scholar Sufis like Muhammad Murad Tang and Khwaja Azam Diddamari, but also by the unnoticed legacy of his role in the history of Kashmir. For example, a Hindu who visited Shaikh Dawud has expressed his intention of becoming a Muslim during the Sufi's time. But he became a disciple of Nur Muhammad Parwana, one of the closest companions of Shaikh Dawud, and after his conversion assumed the name of Shaikh Abdul Shakur. Tang also refers to the conversion of another disciple of Shaikh Dawud who came to be known as Shaikh Wantapuri. Although Shaikh Wantapuri lived a married life after his initiation in the Rishi order, his asceticism was highly praised by Tang.

The shrine of Shaikh Dawud in Batmalu had its pilgrims among the lower strata of society as a result of conversion of some Kashmiris to Islam under his influence. One distinctive feature of this development was the presentation of Islam before the common man by the Sufi as a religion of social service. It is not unlikely that several non-Muslim families in the city must have embraced Islam in due course. Although the conversion of such families is not recorded in the history, the researcher's interview with the families bearing the surname

Shaikh point to the social nature of conversion in Kashmir. Until recently there was a community of scavengers called Shaikhs dwelling in the vicinity of the shrine at Barapatthar, midway between Batmalu and Magarmal Bagh that was not conscientious about the observance of prescribed prayers. It appears that the members of this community had nominally accepted Islam over a period of time after the death of Shaikh Dawud. However, Islam manifested itself not in their every day activities but on special occasions like the two *Eids* and, more particularly, on the eve of the death anniversary of Shaikh Dawud. On this day, this community in a place called Takiya organized musical concerts. [48] The members of this community were the listless drug addicts who would amuse themselves with sumptuous vegetarian meal cooked specially on this occasion. Close to the Takiya, is the tomb of Shaikh Fath Shah who is considered by the community to be a disciple of Shaikh Dawud, but this is not recorded in any source.

The impact of the teachings and social role of Shaikh Dawud on the people living in Batmalu and its environs remains unsullied. First, his emphasis on cultivating the land in the context of *Hadith* (already referred) and also in the true manner of Shaikh Nuruddin was very vital to creating awareness among the people. Even up to our times, the areas in the vicinity of Batmalu like Tengpur, Qamarwari, Bemina and Dandarkha have been the major suppliers of vegetable products in the city. As a befitting tribute to Shaikh Dawud, his devotees in Dandarkhah and Batmalu continue to distribute cooked rice *(tahar)* on his death anniversary and other auspicious occasions. There is hardly a day when a devotee(s) does not entertain the pilgrims to the shrine of Batmalu with kahwa, bread, rice and other eatables. One may notice the needy and hungry, as in other shrines, stationed in the precincts of the shrine of Batmalu Sahib. Many families have remained faithful to their traditional occupation, agriculture, in Dandarkha, under the influence of Shaikh Dawud till this day; this despite the fact that Dandarkha is just about a mile from Lal Chowk, an upmarket.

THE 'URS CELEBRATIONS

The shrine of Shaikh Dawud is popularly known as *Ziyarat*-i-Batmalu. It is an important pilgrimage centre in Srinagar with its unique tradition of cementing spiritual and social bonds between different communities.

It is interesting that the shrine of Batmalu continues to be a place of social importance for a considerable number of devotees, especially from the lower rungs of the Kashmiri society. In fact the festival is celebrated with so much ardour that Muslims, including the Gurkhas of Magarmal Bagh, don their new clothes. About 40,000 people assemble at the shrine premises to commemorate the death anniversary of Shaikh Dawood. Street vendors set up stalls on the road-sides, where a variety of items are kept for sale. On the eve of *'urs*, one may notice some traditional items like clay utensils, clay toys etc. sold by the vendors. This aspect of the festivities at the shrine points to the important role the pottery industry enjoyed in the traditional society.

An important feature of the *'urs* celebrations connected with the shrine of Batmalu is the preparation of vegetable dishes by the devotees commemorating the simple and frugal habits of Shaikh Dawud. Dried vegetables, considered a great delicacy, are especially cooked on this festival. Since the Sufi did not eat meat, people cook only vegetables to honour the disciplinary soul. Turnips, radish and tamarind, brinjals and tamarind, *vast-e-haak*, pulses and eggs are usually cooked. Relatives are invited on the occasion. The festival plays an important role in the integration of different communities and castes and in cementing the social relations of the inhabitants of Batmalu, Magarmal Bagh and surrounding areas with other parts of the valley. Though the vegetarian aspect of the Rishis' life has been preserved by the ardent devotees of one the most important urban centres of the Srinagar Valley, ironically, a certain kind of sophistication has crept in the organization of feasts on the *'urs*. Such feasts are the substitutes of the sumptuous *wazwan* considering a variety of vegetable dishes prepared by a professional cook (*waza*). Families who cannot afford to engage a *waza* or invite a large number of friends and relatives on this occasion, nonetheless, stick to a menu fixed by the social norms.

The religious side of *'urs* sees the shrine come alive with reverberating hallowed recitals. The Managing Committee of the

shrine circulates a time table for the information of the devotees of Shaikh Dawud. It precisely specifies the times at which the religious assemblages in respect of the annual *'urs* celebrations would be held. The celebrations last four days only. During the period, in addition to the offering of ordained prayers in congregation, *khatmat* and *manqabat* are read daily between the *'asr* and the *maghrib* prayers. On the eve of *'urs*, *mehfil-i-Dawud* is organized. This religious assembly is held after the offering of the *zuhr* prayer. An appeal is issued in the local press to the devotees to participate in the blessed gatherings proposed to be held at the *Ziyarat*-i-Batmalu.

Interestingly, the day of *'urs* has always been unusually breezy. This fact has earned Batmalu Saheb the sobriquet *Vaav* Batmol. *Vaav* means breeze in Kashmiri.

THE SHRINE Complex

Shaikh Dawud lived in a village called Doriyan near a bridge. [49] He passed away in 1660 A.D./1070 A.H. He was entombed near his langar (public-kitchen) where his devotees erected a mausoleum. A strophe written by Shaikh Momin on Shaikh Dawud's demise is inscribed in plain round Persian writing on the intricately carved door of the shrine. It reads:

سالِ تاریخ وفاتش بآئی
داد الہامی مرا آز بہرِ آں
شیخ مومن با سرِ اخلاص گفت
"بتہ مالو کردہ ماوا در جنان"

Umar Khan, one of the ardent devotees of Shaikh Dawud, built the shrine in its present form more than a century past. This devotee, too, was interred on the southern side of the shrine's compound.

The walls of the shrine on the outside are coated with a thick layer of green coloured plaster. These walls are perfectly complemented by a number of latticework windows. The beautiful eaves of the shrine's verandah rest on four pillars. A flight of marble steps leads to the upper portion of the shrine. As in other shrines, here too, the tiered roof has a pyramidal

form. A lofty wooden tower supporting another small roof has been raised over it. The tower terminates in a spire.

The tomb of Shaikh Dawud is an elevated area. It is raised at a height of 4 feet above the plinth. An enclosed verandah encircles the tomb. It is 6 feet wide on the northern, western, and southern side and its width is 15 feet on the eastern side. [50]

The *Khanqah* lies on the western side of the shrine.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The oral compositions of Shaikh Nuruddin have been imprinted indelibly on the minds of the Kashmiris.

2. During his stay of 17 years in the Valley, Muhammad Hamadani played an important role in the dissemination of the teachings of Islam. He first enrolled Sultan Sikandar as his disciple and wrote for him a treatise on Sufism, *Risala-i Sikandari*, which is now extinct. Under his influence Sultan Sikandar's chief minister and commander-in-chief, Suhabhatta, embraced Islam.
   Such Saiyids had to eat humble pie when Saiyid Muhammad himself called on Shaikh Nuru'd-Din Rishi along with his disciples. He authorised Shaikh Nuruddin, through *Khat-i Irshad*, to enrol disciples. Muhammad Hamadani dispelled the false notion of his Saiyid companions that they alone, by virtue of their noble desent, were capable of providing religious leadership to Kashmiris.

3. Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 1967 (reprint edition), Srinagar: Kesar Publications, p. 288.
   'Tsrar is built on one of the many bare sandy ridges by which the Panjal range subsides into the level of the Valley. Owing to the scarcity of water obtainable, these ridges are seldom cultivated.
   But for its reputed sanctity, it would be difficult to account for its prosperity, as the town owes nothing to its geographical situation. With the exception of the clump of trees about *ziyarat*, and a few vegetable gardens in the town and around it, there is little or no shade or cultivation about the place.'
   Quarter Master General in India in the Intelligence Branch (compiler), *Gazetter of Kashmir and Ladakh*, 1992 (reprint edition), Delhi: Manas Publications.

4. Ibid., p. 287.

5. Ibid., p. 288.

6. After his defeat at the hands of Wazir Fateh Muhammad Khan.

7. Kaimuh is the locality where Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi was born, spent his childhood and reached adolescence. Here (near Gophbal) he also observed the *Sunnah* of dwelling in a cave. At this site, a structure has been raised and dedicated to the memory of the Shaikh. A special attendant at a mosque named Maulvi Sikandar more than a century past constructed it. The chief building material used comprises stones, bricks and wood of deodar tree. The building stands 27 feet and 13 feet on north/south and east/west sides respectively. There are three windows on the west side. The middle one measures 6 feet by 3 feet. This glass window is arched. On its extreme right end, over the top, *Ya Shaikh Nuruddin Nurani* has been written and *Ghauthul Azam Dastagir* on the left. To the west of this

window one can see the composition of Shaikh Nuruddin in which he lays stress on inward but constant remembrance of Allah. According to him, the heart that is engrossed in *zikr* is really blessed:

دِل چھے گاڈ ئے ہۆکھ مو تھاوُن
ذِکرِ ہُند پوٗز دِل لبہِ یو توٚے

Thirty-six wooden posts measuring 10 feet have been fixed on all the sides of this commemorative building. On the southern side, there is a carved wooden door. It is 8 feet long and 4 feet broad. The sloping pyramidal roof of this structure is three tiered. A wooden tower ending in a spire has been raised over it. The newly constructed portion has been cemented. The local residents have been involved in its construction since 1984. It covers a total area of 49 feet x 45 feet. The entrance is on the southern side. On the southwest side, the Cultural Academy, in connection with the 600th birth anniversary of Shaikh Nuruddin, has erected a white coloured commemorative stone (3 feet x 1½ feet). Beside it, lies another stone that is black in colour. These couplets of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi have been inscribed on it:

"ییمو کس شیخ نورِدینس رسولِ کریمن
پھۄر بۆرِس سۭنٛس تام!"

8) Gophbal is near Kaimuh. In Gophbal, Shaikh Nuruddin passed a solitary life, practicing meditation, for 12 years. *Goph* in Kashmiri language means cave and *bal* denotes dwelling. This ground, too, is a site of pilgrimage. Nuruddin's father Shaikh Salaruddin, mother Sadr, wife Zae and son Baba Haidar are inhumed there.

9. Tsimar lies at the declivity of Hunihang, on the outskirts of one of the provinces called Khurnarvav. At Tsimar another structure has been raised as a memorial to Nuruddin. He spent three quiescent years at this spot. The commemorative structure was raised in 7th A. H. A stone on which Shaikh Nuruddin is said to have reposed has been kept in its enclosure.

10. Between 1972 and 1973, the people of Kashmir celebrated the *Sali-e-'Alamdar* ('Alamdar's year) in a deep devotional spirit. The Kashmir Cultural Organization made arrangements for the celebrations. In 1977, the State Government constituted a broad-based sixth birth centenary committee that conducted programmes in the fond memory of this revered Sufi. Radio Kashmir, too, aired a special weekly programme titled "Alamdar-i-Kashmir' for the whole year. In 1978, the National Academy of Letters (Sahitya Academy), New Delhi, held a national seminar.

11. Saiyid Ali, *Tarikh*, folio 33b.

12. Saiyid Ali had links with the family of the Kubrawi Sufis. This is evidenced by the fact that his grandfather was a *mutawalli* of the Khanqah-i-Mualla. Mulla Ahmad bin Sabur, *Khwaraq-ul-Salikin*, p.7.

13. Mulla Ali Raina, *Tadhkirat-ul-'Arifin*, folio 24b.

14. Lawrence, op. cit., p. 289.

15. The name Nuruddin was given by Saiyid Hussain Simnani. "Nanda" in Sanskrit is from "nand", meaning delight, happiness. It means virtuous in Kashmiri. Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir: from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century*, n. d., Bhartiya Publishing House, pp. 136, 137.

16. M. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's transition to Islam: the role of Muslim Rishis*, 2002 (paperback edition), New Delhi: Manohar, p. 38.

17. Ibid., p. 144.

18. Saiyid Ali, *Tarikh*; Abdul Wahhab Nuri, *Fatahath-i-Kubrawi*.

19. Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh also believed in the efficacy of the Nafl prayers. Muhammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar: 1846-1947 a study in socio-cultural change*, 1978, Srinagar: Aamir Publications, p. 106.

20. Whenever a natural disaster was imminent, the Kubrawis offered the *salat-i-istisqa*. They would march in a procession towards the shrine of Shaikh Nuruddin. Men and children on the way to the shrine of Tsrar would join the expedition that started at the *Khanqah*-i-Mu'alla. As they walked in procession, the pilgrims would chant the *istigfar* prayers loud in unison.

21. G. N. Gauhar, *Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali, Makers of Indian literature*, 1988, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, p. 9.

22. Shaikh Nuruddin was born on 10 Zil Hajj 779 / 9 April 1378. G. N. Gauhar opines that Shaikh Nuruddin was born at a village called Khai near Kulgam tehsil. The author quotes one of Shaikh Nuruddin's verses to support his claim: "There in Khai village I took birth". Gauhar's contention is that the Shaikh's parents, after his birth, migrated to Kaimoh. That is why the Shaikh mentions Kaimoh as the place of his residence only in the rest of his verses. G. N. Gauhar, op. cit., p. 18.

23. Here the term ritual does not signify series of actions used in a religious ceremony but an act of obeisance.

24. Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700: social roles of Sufis in Medieval India*, 1996, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, p. 157.

25. Based on Kashmiri wanwun recorded during empirical research on an audio cassette and later translated by the researcher.

26. As already referred, at present, one may locate two graves of Baba Zainuddin at the shrine_ one where the Sufi used to meditate and another where his coffin had been kept. In addition, the shrine complex entombs 18 disciples of Baba Zainuddin.

27. A long flight of stairs leads to the shrine. It is a fine example of the typical Rishi style architecture. Its roof is four tiered and capped by spire. The building is marked by unmatched lattice work.

28. A considerable village in the Lidder valley, prettily situated on the sloping side of the range of mountains some little distance above the left bank of the river, about 12 miles north-east of Islamabad. The Shahkul canal, which traverses the upper portion of the Khourpara pargana, flows beneath the village. Above it, and visible from a distance of some miles, is the ziarat of Zyn-ud-din, one of the four principal disciples of Shah Nur-ud-din. Quarter Master General op. cit., p. 313.

29. The celebrations associated with 'urs of Baba Zainuddin Wali are restricted to some parts of South Kashmir in general and the Anantnag district in particular. Moreover, devotees from Kishtawar, too, participate in the *'urs* celebrations specially the *frove*.

30. The people of Kashmir once held beliefs nearly akin to their Iranian counterparts. "*Frove* is the derivative of *Frovar*, an Avestan term for soul, and has nothing in common with the Sanskrit word *Prad* or *Prado*... The Avestan word *Frovar* is rooted in the term *Fravardin*, meaning honouring the dead. Farvardin is also the name of the month in the new calendar substituting *Artana* (*Artavanam*) in the old Zoroastrian calendar; and it is on the 19th day of this month that Parsis remember their dead, offer wood to the fire and visit their towers of silence on the hills *Farvardin* which has come to occupy the first position in the current calendar and equates well with the month of *Vayukh* in the Kashmiri reckoning. *Vayukh* has one more significant correspondence with Farvardin on account of it being the month in which Kashmiris remember their dead, visit their graves and distribute specially baked loaves of rice, known locally as *Rohan Posh*. This custom of distributing ceremonial bread among villagers on a particular occasion has a close resemblance with the tradition of preparing ceremonial breads for distributing among Parsis. *Sorog*, a

thin wide bread fried in sesame oil, is one such ceremonial bread distributed during Farvardigan."
Gulshan Majid, "The *frove*: a connecting link between Zoroastrianism and Kashmir" in *The journal of Central Asian Studies*, volume 7, 1996, no.1, The University of Kashmir, Srinagar, pp. 62, 63.

31. The word has it that the disciples of Baba Zainuddin carried the snakes in baskets to a nearby place that eventually came to be known as "Puhir Paeijen" or the basket of snakes.

32. Baba Dawud Khaki, *Qasida-i-Lamiya*; Miram Bazaz, *Tadhkirat-ul-Murshidin*; Khwaja Muhammad Azam Diddamari, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir*; Hasan, *Asrar-ul-Akhyar* (third part of his *Tarikh*) etc.

33. Ali Raina, op. cit.; Ishaq Qari, *Chilchihat-ul-Arifin*; Khwaja Miram Bazaz, op. cit. etc.

34. Alternatively, Miram Bazaz writes that Hardi Rishi showed reluctance when Shaikh Hamza Makhdum asked him to share non-vegetarian meal with him. What hindered the Rishi from tasting meat were the reproving glances of Khizr, Christ, Moses, Idris and Ilyaas who were spiritually present at that special event. When the reason behind his refusal was sought, Hardi Rishi revealed his spiritual experience to Shaikh Hamza. Thereon Shaikh Hamza swayed Hardi Rishi into eating non-vegetarian fare saying that it was the command of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). And in order to allay the Rishi's hesitation, Shaikh Hamza earnestly invoked the help of the Prophet (SAW) and ultimately his gracious presence caused the Rishi to taste the non-vegetarian food. However, Miram Bazaz's has given a supernaturalistic description of the event. Miram Bazaz, op. cit.

35. Haidar Tulmuli, *Hidayat-ul-Mukhlisin*.

36. Azam Diddamari, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir*, Urdu translation by Shamsuddin Ahmad, Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Research Centre, Srinagar, 2001, p. 170.
Hasan Pir Ghulam, *Asrar-ul-Akhyar*, Urdu translation entitled *Tadhkira-i-Auliya-i-Kashmir*, Kohinoor Press, 1960, p. 134.

37. Haidar Tulmuli, op. cit.

38. M. Ishaq Khan, op. cit., p. 148.

39. Diddamari (Urdu translation), op. cit., p.112; Hasan (Urdu translation), op. cit., p. 112.

40. Ranboh is a scattered hamlet, situated at the edge of the forest just below the shrine of Baba Payamuddin. It is about 5 miles

south of the village of Kountra, the path leading towards the Gulmarg. Quarter Master General, op. cit., p.694.

41. L. M. Joshi, "Prolegomena on religious geography", Harbans Singh (ed.), *Approaches to the study of religion*, Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 125.

42. Saiyid Kreiri was a Kubrawi Sufi. Kreiri, situated in the west of the Valley, is a place of popular pilgrimage. It lies in the *pargana* of Kruhin in Kashmir.

43. Bamalu lies on the banks of the Dudh Ganga river. Unfortunately, such has been the environmental degradation in the Valley that the rivulet has now dried and several houses and business shops have sprung up on the once flowing stream. Bamalu was once a village. After being incorporated into the city, the Dudh Ganga continued to wind its way through Dandar Kah and Batmalu until the 1960s. Unfortunately, the rivulet dried up gradually following encroachment of the land along its banks by selfish residents. Many houses and shops have come up on what was once a flowing stream irrigating a major chunk of agricultural land around Batmalu.

44. Census, 1931, 1, p. 8.

45. Muhammad Murad Teng, *Tuhfat-ul-Fuqara*; Diddamari, op. cit.

46. اطلبوالرزق من خبایاالارض

47. A traveller in the Sufi path.

48. Based on an interview with some local residents having intimate knowledge of the daily affairs of the Takiya before a drive against such places in the city was launched by some social reformers in the early 1970s.

49. Hasan (Urdu translation), op. cit., p. 258.

50. Muhammad Yusuf Teng (ed.), *Kaeshur Encyclopaedia* (in Kashmiri), Vol. 2, 1989, Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, p. 111.

V
The Shrine of Dastagir Saheb

Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, [1] the exceptionally renowned Sufi of Baghdad, is the founder of the Qadiri order. Saiyid Niamatullah Shah Qadiri, a descendent of Shaikh Abdul Qadir, introduced this order in Kashmir. [2] He was the disciple of Shaikh Muhammad Darwesh Qadiri. But Saiyid Niamatullah's stay in the Valley did not last long. In Kashmir, one of his disciples was Shaikh Mirak Mir. [3] His father expired when Shaikh Mirak was quite young. He spurned the advice of his relatives to follow in their footsteps and join the royal office. Even as a kid, he was more religiously inclined than most children of his age. His time was spent in offering devout praise to Allah at a *Khanqah* in Srinagar. [4] Shaikh Mirak breathed his last on 5 Safar 990A. H. / 1 March 1582 A. D. He was inhumed at Malaratta in Srinagar.

Another Qadiri Sufi who arrived in Kashmir was Saiyid Isma'il Shami. [5] He traced his lineage to Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. Though his spiritual journey in Kashmir did not last long, he made an outstanding contribution to radiate the precepts of the Qadiri order in the Valley. The services of his disciple Mir Nazuk Niyazi are also laudable.

Mir Nazuk, formerly a disciple of Baba Dawud Khaki, had been initiated into the Suharwardi order. [6] But when Saiyid Isma'il Shami saw in Mir Nazuk a spark of future excellence, he

initiated him into the Qadiri order. He presented a *khirqa* to Mir Nazuk and authorized him to enroll disciples in the Qadiri order.

Mir Nazuk expired on 9 Zul Hijja 1022 A. H. / 20 January 1619 and was interred in Qazi Kadal, Srinagar. Consequently, Mir Yusuf, Mir Nazuk's eldest son, was entrusted the custody of his father's *Khanqah* at Khanyar in Srinagar. But Mir Yusuf died of pestilence at a young age in 1027 A.H. / 1617 A.D. Hence the assignment of safekeeping of the *Khanqah* at Khanyar and also the expansion of the Qadiri order was left to Mir Muhammad Ali, the third son of Mir Nazuk. [7]

In 1096 A. H. / 1684 A. D. , another distinguished Qadiri Sufi Shah Muhammad Fazil Qadiri Gilani, accompanied by his elder brother Shah Abul Hasan, reached Kashmir via Peshawar. [8] However, according to another source, [9] the Qadiri Sufi came from Baghdad and reached Kashmir via Tattha (in Sindh) during the rule of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707 A.D.). Shah Abul Hasan stayed in the Valley for a short while. He left after getting a recondite licence to leave Kashmir, from Ghauth-ul Azam Dastagir. Shah Fazil Qadiri, however, stayed back to kindle the fame of the Qadiri order in the right direction and convey its spiritual instructions in a universally comprehensible manner. He is regarded as the real architect of the Qadiri order in the Kashmir Valley. Initially, he together with his companions was lodged in Eidgah. During the same time, an honourable elderly citizen named Khan Abdul Qadir Khan Chewu lived in Khanyar. He was also known by the name of Qazi Khan. In fact, the name of the ward Khanyar derives from his surname Khan. Abdul Qadir Khan became a fervid follower of Shah Fazil. This ardent disciple was so filled with intense love for his true and rightful spiritual teacher that he transferred the proprietorship of his property to Shah Fazil.

The incessant fame of Shah Fazil Qadiri made Khanyar a halting place for both nobles and the so-called plebeians. It became a popular rendezvous for the votaries, devout, abstemious and learned men who convened to gain spiritual graces.

Shah Fazil kept himself engaged in reflective worship and disciplining his soul. He was selfless and gave to charity all that he had. His virtuous deeds spoke for themselves. His profuse generosity earned him the title Sakhi Padshah or the bountiful king.

Shah Fazil's son Abdul Qadir was popularly called Mir Badshah. Saiyid Ghulamuddin Azad was his *khalifa*. It was he who constructed the existing hospice (*Khanqah*-i-Dastagir), edifice of pilgrimage and the sepulchre of Shah Fazil in Khanyar at his own expense. [10] He has also jotted down the date of construction that reads as follows:

سال تاریخ ایں بنا آزاد
گفت شد خانقاہِ گیلانی

Saiyid Buzurg Shah Qadiri was the son of Ghulamuddin Azad. His liberality, munificence and dignity were peerless. Large rent-free grants were put in his possession. It was during his lifetime that the langar of the *Khanqah*-i-Dastagir got publicized. Here paupers and orphans were given a good square meal twice a day. Elderly persons were given a regular stipend.

Sardar Abdullah Khan, the governor of Kashmir, was a faithful pupil of Buzurg Shah. During his rule, a traveller (1221 A. H. / 1806 A. D.) came to the Valley from Qandahar. He had brought along with him the relic of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. Abdullah Khan acquired this relic from the traveller in lieu of Rs.11000/-. He handed it over to Buzurg Shah and formally bequeathed the relic to his upright spiritual guide. Buzurg Shah built a grand structure in its honour. Thenceforth, a systematically uninterrupted mode of its effulgent unveiling commenced and the practice continues till date. The chamber where the relic was kept was the same place where Saiyid Jalal Shah Gilani used to completely occupy himself in prayers for extended intervals of time. He was among the progeny of Sakhi Shah Muhammad Fazil Qadiri and had married the daughter of Saiyid Ghulamuddin Azad. At this chamber, Saiyid Jalal had a vision of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani who honoured the place with his unapparent presence thrice. The founder of the Qadiri order asked him to vacate the space for him. And this is the reason why the place was chosen as repository of the relic of the famed Qadiri Sufi. According to Saiyid Jalal, Abdul Qadir Jilani guaranteed the relic being a part of his beard on the right side of his chin. The sighting of the relic started that season onwards. Saiyid Jalal himself reverently unveiled the relic for

three continuous years on the *'urs* of Abdul Qadir Jilani. Afterwards, the task was fulfilled by another well-known personality Nuruddin Pampori. Thereafter the legacy was carried on by his descendents who have been rendering this service till date.

Mir Yasin Qadiri, a *sajjada nishin* at the shrine, gave amplitude to the present structure of pilgrimage at Khanyar and conditioned its elegance further. His work was highly esteemed by Dogra rulers like Maharaja Ranbir Singh and Pratap Singh. The rent-free grant fixed for the public kitchen was increased.

During the rule of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, a man of noble disposition named Khwaja Sanaullah Shawl (1879 A.D.) expended some amount of money on the fabric of the shrine and employed workers to spruce it up. The date of this work has been penned in these lines:

زیارت خانۂ زیبا فرو گفت
دگر تعمیر عالی شاہ ہمایوں

Mir Hasan Shah Gilani, the grandson of Mir Yasin Qadiri and the son of Mir Saiyid Ahmad Gilani, was magnanimous like his forefathers. He made every effort to see that the indigent never went hungry. On the eve of *'urs*, he used to distribute *pilav* as a blessed fare among the people of all walks of life. Workers appertaining to the place of pilgrimage and helpers in charge of the shrine at Khanyar were given wages in kind. Hasan Shah was vociferously against any kind of offering, gift, donation, collection of funds etc. He was a personality ennobled by true generosity. His entire real estate including small bequests was utilized for pious and religious purposes.

THE SHRINE COMPLEX

The architectural form of *Khanqah*-i-Dastagir is akin to the style of designing applied to the construction of several Rishi shrines in the Valley. Specifically, the ornamental wooden tower ending in a spire erected on the pyramidal roof and windows on the west side exceedingly match those eminent in the rest of the Rishi shrines. The main building material used in its construction big blocks of stones, baked bricks, cement and

wood. The plinth is exclusively made up of several blocks of stone.

There are three elongated windows each on the south north side and seven symmetrically alike windows on the west side. All the windows are oblong and have a pleasing symmetry. They are arched and 11ft by 7ft in size. A 4ft broad skylight measuring 8ft in height has been placed on top of these windows. The windows are extremely good models of woodwork. Facing the *qiblah* is a pair of oriels that have been fixed at extreme parallel ends for the purpose of admitting light. They have made the place seem bigger and brighter.

Inside the shrine, two finely carved deodar pillars can be spotted. The workmanship that has gone into their making is truly remarkable. These majestic pillars tower to a height of 22ft. Each measures 2½ ft round its girth. They firmly hold a five-fold roof. The rooftops appear like terraces.

The *Khanqah*-i-Dastagir has a high elegant ceiling. On the west side, a chandelier dangles from the ceiling in the midst of two posts. This portion of the building projects out. On the eastern side, a *hamam* that Saiyid Jalaluddin Mushtaq got built can be located near his *Khanqah*.

THE SHRINE OF DASTAGIR SAHEB

The shrine of Dastagir Saheb at Khanyar in Srinagar is one of the most frequented shrines of the Valley. Another shrine bearing the same name is situated at Sarai Bala in Srinagar. Both the shrines are repositories of the sacred relic of the founder of the Qadiri order, Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. As the shrine of Khanyar had at one time been the abode of some prominent Sufis of the Qadiri order, it became the most popular Qadiri shrine in the Valley. In spite of this, the shrine at Sarai Bala, too, has become an important centre of the Qadiri order in Kashmir's recent history. It is noteworthy that there was a small mosque in Sarai Bala founded somewhere in the nineteenth century. Ever since the relic was housed in the mosque, the mosque itself turned into a shrine. With the offerings and donations received by the shrine, the income of the shrine augmented. Consequently, the old structure of the mosque was pulled down and an imposing edifice replaced it in the late 1970s. Remarkably, it was the National Conference

leader Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah who laid the foundation of the new building. Significantly, both the shrines under reference were once the strongholds of the National Conference.

The veneration of the sacred relics of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani at the two shrines in Srinagar by a great number of Muslims raises several questions of religious, historical and sociological nature in a researcher's mind. How is it that Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, who never visited Kashmir or not even the rest of the subcontinent, is one of the most popular Sufis in Kashmir? How is it that his devotees take pride in calling themselves '*dastagiris*'? How is it that the *dastagiris* have almost formed themselves into a cult? How is it that a majority of *dastagiris* deviates from the *Shari'ah* in several respects? In order to find answers to such questions, it is important to study the religious life of the devotees of the shrine. What follows is merely based on my closer association with such devotees during the period of my research. I studied the religious life and rituals at the shrine not only on the days of '*urs* but also on the 11th day of several lunar months. Interestingly, the organization of special religious assemblies on the eve of Dastagir Saheb's '*urs* at the residence of devotees also shows the impact of the Qadiri Sufi on the minds of the Kashmiris.

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND RITUALS

The popular cognition of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani in Kashmir is that of a Sufi who is superior to all other Sufis. He is known as Dastagir because of the firm belief among his devotees that he comes to their help in times of adversity. Certainly, his help is directly sought by the devotees as is evident from their loud cries 'Ya Dastagir'. This may sound incredible but one has to keenly observe such a phenomenon for promoting an objective understanding of this social reality. The unbounded faith of devotees in the Dastagir's help may be traced to certain assertions attributed to the Sufi. The great Sufi of Baghdad is reputed to have said 'my foot is on the neck of every Sufi.' [11]

It is not in Kashmir alone that such a belief about the exalted spiritual stature of Abdul Qadir Jilani exists but this belief persists in various other regions of the subcontinent. Added to this is the veneration of the Qadiri Sufi as Pir-i-Pir and

Ghauthul Azam. [12] Both the titles are suggestive of the eternal impact of the Sufi's personality on his devotees. Their belief is that the Dastagir visits their house as and when they organize a *khatam* in his honour. There is no dearth of families in Kashmir where a room has not been specially reserved for such a solemn occasion. The room remains closed for most part of the year except on such occasions. An interview conducted by the researcher with the devotees regarding such supernatural activities was revelatory in several respects. First, it was stated that the Dastagir does not make any physical appearance. It is his spiritual presence that graces the occasion. Not all the devotees present at such a religious assembly can feel the presence of the Sufi's spirit. Only the spiritually illuminated and gifted souls can communicate with the spirit of the Qadiri Sufi. This is why the host who arranges such gatherings at home, in several cases, extends a special invite to a spiritually elevated soul. The proceedings of such gatherings are thus conducted by such spiritually elevated men or, in some cases, such a task is assigned to their trustworthy disciples. Several persons associated with the shrines of Dastagir Saheb or other shrines are invited by the host to mark the occasion. As in other *khatmat*, some quantity of water, nabad, shirni, dry dates, dry fruits etc. are placed before the spiritual gatherings on such occasions. At the close of the *khatam*, all those present consecrate the eatables by puffing them up. It is customary to distribute the blessed eatables among the devotees present who in turn pass them on to others as *tabarruk* or blessed fare in their home.

At the conclusion of the *khatam*, the guests are entertained with the famous Kashmiri feast known as *wazwan*. Those who cannot afford *wazwan*, serve the guests *kahwa*, bread and *halwa*. The well to do, and particularly the *nouveau riche*, in the city have been spending money freely not only on the feasts but also on the invitation cards printed exclusively for the purpose. It may thus be observed that the celebration of the *'urs* of Pir Dastagir has become a memorable and happy event in the lives of his devotees. Some families organize musical concerts at homes. The most popular singer is Abdu'l-Rashid Hafiz whose services are engaged along with his troupe comprising five persons. The quintet led by Hafiz sings *n'at* and specifically *manqabat* praising the Prophet (SAW) and the

Dastagir respectively. The songs are mostly sung in Kashmiri, though the musical concerts of such nature also resonate with some Persian *n'at* and *manqabat*. It has almost become customary to engage the singers during night of the first eleven days preceding the eve of *'urs* of Dastagir Saheb.

Quite interestingly, among the devotees of the founder of the Qadiri Sufi, the organization of musical concerts on the occasion of *'urs* has almost assumed the force of law; this despite the fact that Shaikh 'Abdu'l Qadir Jilani, having their basis in the Hanbali School of thought, had aversion to music. In fact, none of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence sanction music. It is, therefore, intriguing that the devotees who on one hand show commendable awareness of the true teachings of 'Abdu'l Qadir Jilani, on the other, take delight in listening to music on certain religious events.

DAILY LIFE AT THE SHRINE

While pilgrims throng the shrine of Dastagir Saheb at Khanyar throughout the year, the chief occasion for paying homage is the *'urs*. The statistics show that pilgrim rush is steadily increasing day by day. The devotees come from different parts of Srinagar. The journey to the shrine is undertaken as a mark of respect and loyalty to the great Qadiri Sufi. Once near the shrine, the devotees reverently stroke and kiss its walls and windows. It may sound strange but the researcher has seen many elderly women working themselves up into a frenzy as they kneel with arms wide open in front of the shrine. The air often resounds with *Ya Dasgir* and the devotees unflinchingly bond with their Dastagir.

Many people come with a particular this-worldly purpose. Petitions are made for favours besought. The ones whose prayers have been answered through the intercession of Dastagir Saheb, express gratitude for favours bestowed. Some momentarily needy and others content. But no matter what state a pilgrim might be in, offerings are always made. Also, the needy people are given alms that line the way to these shrines. Quite often, *tabbaruk_* mainly dry fruits, *tahar*, *firni* etc.is distributed by the devotees among those present. What a sight it is to behold the rich and the poor sharing the same food. Some people keep a portion of it aside for their family so

that at home their loved ones too would benefit from the consecrated food.

Some devotees address the Dastagir amidst sobs and shrieks. It is heartening to see people consoling complete strangers in distressing times. The oft-given advice is to keep the faith in the Almighty Allah and not be disheartened. Though these words compose them, the heart rending expression seems to take comfort from the fact that the Qadiri Sufi is by their side. It is strange yet true that once inside the shrine, on the personal front, a devotee connects more with his 'Dasgeer' than anyone else.

This worldly activity may go on but the religious and spiritual aspects are not forgotten altogether. First and foremost is the *namaz* and that is offered in congregation at the hours prescribed. And, when a preacher or some knowledgeable person gives talk on the life and contribution of the Sufi or any moral subject based on Qur'an and *Hadith*, the devotees show commendable receptivity to the didactic message conveyed. Once on their own, a few visitors pray quietly and meditate alone pensively in some corner of the shrine while others lament before the Sufi. A majority is seen reciting the Qur'an. At the shrine of Dastagir Saheb and also elsewhere, women, especially, sit in a special enclosure meant for them and recite the Qur'an softly. Others read n'at etc. while gently swaying to and fro in exhilaration.

Many devotees revealed that frequenting the shrine of Dastagir Saheb in addition to the holding of religious gatherings at home in honour of the Qadiri Sufi made them prosper. Their firm belief is that as long as Allah's and then Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani's blessings are with them, they will do well in their chosen fields.

THE '*URS* CELEBRATIONS

The annual festival at the *Khanqah* of Dastagir Saheb, Khanyar is celebrated with traditional gaiety. The entire area wears a festive look. The shrine complex presents a glittering view and enthusiastic devotees can be found paying obeisance, making offerings, attending religious conventions, keeping vigil while reciting verses of the Quran, *durud* and *n'at* and, above

all, offering ordained congregational prayers. The blessed days of the auspicious *'urs* ceremony are observed for eleven days.

Just days before the *'urs*, people from far off places come to Khanyar and make good use of its commercial prospects. Sweet vendors come for a short duration of the fair and so do the potters. Traders generally specialize in regional wares like wooden spoons, earthen pots, traditional utensils, wicker work baskets etc. Some sell literary information on the Qadiri Sufi, *manqabat*, *n'at* and recitals intoned at the *Khanqah* of Khanyar. Those selling audio cassettes of the recitals at the shrine do brisk business. Another category is of the itinerant beggars. It ensures that it never goes hungry. Though all of them may not be the devotees of Dastagir Saheb yet some among them combine business with devotion. Finally, no one goes empty handed either spiritually or materially.

THE EVE OF *'URS* AT THE *KHANQAH* OF DASTAGIR SAHEB, KHANYAR

The office of the *sajjada nishin* concerned issues a detailed programme of planned events in connection with the *'urs* celebrations to be held at the *Khanqah* of Dastagir Saheb at Khanyar in the interest of the public and the devotees at large. A special meeting is convened at the *Khanqah* premises. It is presided over by the sajjada nishin. The participants include members of the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board, *mujawir* (helpers at the shrine) etc. They decide on the fixed schedule to be followed during the eleven blessed days of the *'urs*.

The *'urs* celebrations starting 29th Rabi-ul-Awwal last eleven days and mark a special occasion in the lives of the devotees especially those living nearby. Throughout this period glittering religious assemblages are held at the *Khanqah*. In this regard, a routine is established. Two major religious assemblies attended by countless devotees are held on all the eleven days of the *'urs*. The first organized immediately after the *fājr* prayer goes on till forenoon. The second one commences right after the *'asr* prayer. Devotees are requested through local press to attend the assemblages to further strengthen their faith thereby gaining felicity and contentment of this world and the Hereafter.

Departments of Electricity, Municipality, Water Works etc. are requested to extend cooperation and support the efforts of the Waqf Board in making the annual gala *'urs* at the *Khanqah* Khanyar a grand success. The Board sees to it that the wayfarers feel at ease even in rush and have access to clean drinking water, first aid, prayer mats etc. Moreover, transport plying on the routes leading to the *Khanqah* is beefed up.

THE *'URS* SCHEDULE

In accordance with the archaic practice, the sacred hair of Dastagir Saheb is sighted on the first day of the auspicious *'urs* ceremony, the second and the concluding one. It is exhibited after every ordained prayer i. e. a total of fifteen times in three days. The *'urs* schedule at the Khanyar shrine is as follows:

10^{th} Rabi-us-Sani_ *shab*-i-*awwal* or the first night when people keep themselves awake at night and recite verses from the Quran etc.

11^{th} Rabi-us-Sani_ *'urs* is celebrated with traditional fervour. The holy hair is sighted.

12^{th} Rabi-us-Sani_ second day of the *'urs* celebrations. Sacred hair is exhibited.

14^{th} Rabi-us-Sani_ *shab*-i-*doem* or the second night of recitals.

15^{th} Rabi-us-Sani_ concluding *'urs* ceremony. People yet again catch a glimpse of the holy hair after prescribed five prayers.

Even it is the first day of the eleven days' *'urs* celebrations, the *Khanqah* premises at Khanyar sees huge crowds. Pilgrims start assembling quite early. Those who had not attended night long recitals join others to offer the *fajr* prayer in congregation. As the day progresses, the number only gets higher. It is particularly on the days of relic unveiling that the number is exceptionally high.

10TH RABI-US-SANI_ A DAY PRIOR TO *'URS*

On the occasion of *shab-i-awwal*, the shrine at Khanyar witnesses thousands of devotees. *Khatmat*, *durud*, *n'at*, *munajat*, Quranic verses etc. are intoned throughout the night. The recitals go on till *fajr* prayer offered at the break of dawn (11th Rabi-us-Sani).

On this day the *Khanqah* of Dastagir Saheb at Khanyar witnesses religio-devotional activities. The day as usual starts with the offering of *fajr* prayer in congregation. Soon follows the holding of a religious assembly at the *Khanqah*. Thousands of devotees attend the convention till its completion at forenoon. The second one is held after the offer of *'asr* prayer in congregation. The number of devotees increases further as it is the time when most of them return home from work.

People are informed about the *'isha* prayer's timing through local dailies. Continuing with the established usage at the shrine of Dastagir Saheb, a talk on the religious or moral subject based on the Quran, the exemplary life of the venerated Qadiri Sufi etc. is given between the *maghrib* and the *'isha* prayers.

On the fulfillment of the *'isha* prayer, night long recitals commence. Vigil is observed with prayers, recitation of verses from the Quran, *durud*, *n'at*, *munajat*, *manqabat*, *Kibriyat-i-Ahmar*, recollection of the names and attributes of Allah etc.

The sighting of the relic of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani after every ordained prayer is one of the major highlights of the day.

11TH RABI-US-SANI_ *'URS* EVE

This is the auspicious day of the *'urs*. On this day timings of each prescribed prayer is announced to ensure maximum participation and timely arrival of people in the congregational prayers.

The first religious assemblage is held after the *fajr* prayer and devotees start convening for the second one soon after the *'asr* prayer.

This day, too, ardent devotees catch a glimpse of the holy relic of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani after every ordained prayer.

On this day the number of pilgrims is so great that sometimes elderly people feel exhausted. When the researcher

questioned one of the devotees if she felt uncomfortable amongst the huge crowd, she replied: "Nobody complains or is complaining. The pleasure we finally get on having a glimpse of the holy hair of Dastagir Saheb cannot be compared to anything."

12TH RABI-US-SANI- THE SECOND DAY OF *'URS* CELEBRATIONS

The second day of the *'urs* is specially reserved for the ladies. Yet the number of men and women on 11th as well as the 12th of Rabi-us-Sani is almost the same.

On this day too, the offering time of five prescribed prayers is highly publicized. Religious meetings at the *Khanqah* are convened at their respective times i. e. after the offering of *fajr* and *'asr* prayers in congregation.

14TH RABI-US-SANI_ SECOND NIGHT OF RECITALS

14th Rabi-us-Sani is celebrated as the second eve of night long intonations. The occasion is called shab-i-doem or the second night. Yet again, timings of all the five prayers, particularly the *'isha* prayer, are made known to all. It is after the fulfillment of the *'isha* prayer in congregation that ardent devotees assemble at the *Khanqah* once again and hold an all-night prayer vigil. Several thousands of devotees staying awake recite the Quranic verses, *durud*, *n'at*, repeat orally the names and attributes of the Almighty Allah etc. This goes on till the *fajr* prayer of 15th Rabi-us-Sani. This is the day when *'urs* celebrations conclude and the completion ceremony is held.

15TH RABI-US-SANI_ THE GRAND FINALE

The final celebration at the *Khanqah* Khanyar concludes on the 15th of Rabi-us-Sani with several thousands of devotees once again waiting to catch sight of the sacred relic Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. The shrine premises and the roads that pass through are specially crowded with devotees at the time of five ordained prayers. Scores can be found standing eagerly to see the resplendent unveiling of the holy relic for one last time in the lunar year.

'URS CELEBRATIONS AT THE DASTAGIR SAHEB SHRINE, SARAI PAYEEN

The annual *'urs* at the shrine of Dastagir Saheb, Sarai Payeen, is observed with festal fervour by thousands of fervid devotees of the exalted Qadiri Sufi. Scores of people, especially from nearby areas like Abiguzar, Lal Chowk, Amira Kadal, Maharaja Bazar, Magarmal Bagh and Batmalu gather to participate in the *'urs* to mark the anniversary of the great Qadiri Sufi Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. Pilgrim rush is conspicuous on all the sanctified 11 days of the *'urs* celebrations. It is particularly on days of relic exhibition that serpentine queues can be spotted outside the shrine as devotees wait for *'ziyarat* 'of the relic of Shaikh Abdul Qadir and, more importantly, offering the ordained congregational prayers. The space at the shrine not being enough to accommodate the massive rush of pilgrims, connecting roads remain blocked at the time of offering prayers. Not to leave the ones who are eagerly waiting outside the shrine premises to seek a glimpse of the holy relic, the same is shown to them through the *darshan* window.

At Sarai Payeen, quite unlike the shrine of Dastagir Saheb at Khanyar, the relic is displayed for the public on 11^{th} and 12^{th} of Rabi-us-Sani. It is unveiled a total of 10 times i. e. two days after each prescribed congregational prayer. Here too, the celebrations start on 29^{th} Rabi-ul-Awwal and last for 11 days.

The Chairman Auqaf Gousia, Sarai Payeen, Maharaja Bazar, along with the members organizes the programmes connected with annual *'urs* celebration. The programme of *Khatmat* at this shrine is similar to one issued by the office of the *sajjada nishin* Khanyar. The Auqaf Gousia Sarai Payeen, however, makes prepartions for the same on its own.

A list showing the time at which certain religious events will take place is prepared. The devotees are apprised of this schedule through the local dailies duly issued by the Chairman Auqaf Gousia Sarai Payeen. The timings of five prescribed congregational prayers are issued alongside the schedule. An appeal is made to all the ardent devotees of Dastagir Saheb to participate in the religious gatherings so as to invigorate their

faith further and gain the blessings of the auspicious ceremony and the happiness of this world and next world.

Assisstance of various Departments viz. Municipality, Electricity, Water Works etc. is sought. The idea is to make the annual gala event at the shrine of Dastagir Saheb in Sarai Payeen successful.

THE *'URS* PROGRAMME

The following activities take place at the *Khanqah* premises:

9TH RABI-US-SANI

Soon after offering the *fajr* prayer in congregation, a glittering religious assembly is held at the *Khanqah*. Quranic verses, *n'at*, *munajat*, *durud* etc. are intoned.

Once the morning session of the religious convention is over, the holy relic of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani is taken out of its container. It is then bathed in the presence of sajjada nishin, Sarai Payeen.

10TH RABI-US-SANI

Following the prescribed routine, hallowed gatherings are held, the first immediately after offering the *fajr* prayer in congregation. It goes on till forenoon.

The *Khanqah* sees maximum participation of devotees after the offering of the congregational *'isha* prayer. This is the time when night long recitals commence. Devotees keep themselves awake the whole night. The intonations include verses from the Quran, *Khatmat*, *durud*, *n'at*, *munajat* etc. These go on till day break the time when *fajr* prayer is offered in congregation on 11th Rabi-us-Sani.

11TH RABI-US-SANI

The *Khatmat* programme on 11th and 12th Rabi-us-Sani is the same as the one organized at the *Khanqah* of Dastagir Saheb in Khanyar. The sacred relic is unveiled for the public after each prescribed prayer.

12[TH] RABI-US-SANI

The holy relic is exhibited again five times. Devotees catch its sight for one last time after the offer of the ordained *'isha* prayer in congregation.

FOOTNOTES:

1) He was an extraordinary writer. His prominent writings include *Al-Ghunya li Talib Tariq Hal*-aq, *Al-Fath al-Rabbani*, *Futuh ul-Ghaib* among others. The tenets of Qadiri order are principally derived from these works.

2) In India, Shah Niamatullah and Makhdum Muhammad Jilani towards the middle of the fifteenth century introduced the Qadiri order. However, it did not become an established order until the arrival of Muhammad Ghauth (of Uchch d. 1517 A.D.), who claimed descent from Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, and even then the order remained localized.
Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi orders in Islam*, 1971, Oxford, p. 44.

3) He was the son of Saiyid Shamsuddin Andrabi whose ancestors had emigrated from Andrab during the rule of Sultan Sikandar.

4) The *Khanqah* called *Khanqah*-i-Andrabi was located in Srinagar. It seems that it was built by one of the ancestors of Saiyid Mirak.
A. Q. Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir*: *from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century*, n. d., Bhartiya Publishing House, p.131.

5) He acquired his early education from his father Saiyid Sulaiman. Saiyid Muhammad Qasim initiated him into the Qadiri order.

6) It was Baba Dawud Khaki who introduced Mir Nazuk to Saiyid Isma'il.

7) Mir Ahmad (d. 1041 A. H. /1631 A.D.), the second son of Mir Nazuk, was not keen on succeeding his brother, Mir Yusuf.
A. Q. Rafiqi, op. cit., f. n. 4, p.133.

8) Saiyid Abdul Wahid, an excerpt from his yet to be published work titled *Ziyarat -i-Pir Dastagir Khanyar main madfoon akabarin ka ijmali t'aruf* (in Urdu).

9) M. Y. Teng (ed.), *Keiashur Encyclopedia* (in Kashmiri), Vol. 1, 1989, Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, p. 169.

10) It was built in 1767 A.D. during the period of Nuruddin Khan Bamzai's governorship.

11) A Balochi tale about the Prophet's ascension to heaven explains why the Pir-i-Dastgir had claimed, "My foot is on the neck of every Sufi." When Gabriel had to leave the Prophet Muhammad alone before entering into God's presence, Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani offered his shoulder so that the Prophet could step on it and reach the Highest Presence, and he blessed the Sufi by putting every other Sufi's neck under his feet. Schimmel conjectures that the importance of the eleventh day is reflected in the Panjabi custom of distributing charity on the eleventh of every month. Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian subcontinent,* Netherlands: Leiden-Koln, 1980, p.122.

12) Ghauth literally means help. The title is given to the most distinguished member in the hierarchy of the Sufis.

VI
The Khanqah-i-Naqshbandiya

This shrine occupies an important place in Kashmir for two reasons. First, it is the only shrine of the Naqshbandi order [1] that attracts pilgrims from several parts of Srinagar, mostly the traditional ones on the eve of the *'urs* and on Fridays. The participation of Muslims from rural Kashmir is almost minimal. This fact, however, does not minimize the importance of the shrine. What is noteworthy is the elitist character of the shrine as a centre of political activities during various periods of Kashmir history. As early as the period of Akbar, the site of the present shrine had assumed importance because of the religious and political activities of Khwaja Khawand Mahmud Naqshbandi, who was stationed there.

Khwaja Khawand Naqshbandi played a conclusive role in the spread of Naqshbandi order in Kashmir. [2] He proved wrong the suspicion harboured by Jamil Beig, a Mughal officer. Jamil Beig had somehow allowed a doubt to enter his mind whether or not the Kashmiris and their *'ulama* would like the missionary ardour of this Naqshbandi Sufi. Quite to the contrary, Khawand Naqshbandi's influence was so enormous that not only did the local people flock to him for guidance, but even teachers and *'ulama* contended for becoming his disciples. As a matter of fact, his activities prompted several Central Asian Sufis of Naqshbandi order to promulgate their ideas in the Valley and turn it into a centre of their activities. Khwaja Amin, a nephew of Khwaja Ishaq Dehbedi, vied with Khawand Naqshbandi in enrolling disciples into the Naqshbandi order. But such was the acme of Khwaja Khawand Naqshbandi's spiritual personality that ultimately his rival himself sought the Khwaja's discipleship. Further, Kashmir under the spiritual guidance of

Khwaja Khawand created quite a ripple in the Mughal court. He went to Agra before Akbar's death in 1012 / 1603 and enrolled a number of high dignitaries as his disciples. These include Mirza Aziz Koka, some distinguished ladies of the harem like Sultan Salima Begum and Gulrukh Begum. The Mughal emperor Akbar, too, had sought the blessings of the Khwaja once. On his return to Srinagar in 1050 A.H./1606-07 A.D., the Naqshbandi order had prospered to such an extent that the Khwaja delegated his Kashmiri disciples to disseminate its teachings in the regions as far as Kabul and Tibet. Such was the reliance placed by the Khwaja on his disciples of Kashmiri origin that he granted permission to Mulla Abdul Hasan, an illiterate Kashmiri, to spread the social and moral teachings of Sufism in Tibet.

The Khwaja forged close ties with some Mughal nobles of high social position who were also his ardent disciples. Emperor Jahangir showed much interest in his mission of expanding the Naqshbandi order in the Valley during his visit in 1620 but later banished the Khwaja to Kabul. Although Khwaja Khawand Naqshbandi returned to Kashmir after Jahangir's death, Shah Jahan, under the sway of his influential Diwan Allami Afzal Khan thought it prudent to exile the Naqshbandi Sufi to Lahore where he died on 11 Shaban 1052 A.H. / 25 October 1642 A.D. S.A. Rizvi has put forth a thesis that on account of his hostility to the Shiite, Khwaja Khawand's role in Kashmir was regarded as a "potential threat" to the interests of the Mughal empire. [3]

It was during the time of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi, the son of Khwaja Khawand, that the present site of the shrine gained importance as a religious centre. Unlike his father, Khwaja Muinuddin did not dabble in politics but devoted himself to the dissemination of the teachings of the Naqshbandi order in the Valley. Far from being an abode of a Sufi devoted to asceticism, the *Khanqah* of Khwaja Muinuddin became a real centre of learning. The Khwaja's main contribution lies not only in strengthening the Naqshbandi order in the Valley but also in reconciling *Shari'ah* and Sufism within the wider framework of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. This phenomenon may be attributed to his firm basis in both Sufism and *Shari'ah*. He was trained in religious sciences by Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dihalwi and received initiation into the Naqshbandi order from his father. He took care of many disciples of his father in Kashmir but probably because of being a pupil of Shaikh Abdul

Haqq thought it worthwhile to devote himself to the cause of disseminating exoteric and esoteric knowledge without mixing religion with politics. That is why he was able to author several works including *Fatawa-i-Naqshbandiya,* [4] *Mirat-i-Taibiya* and *Kanz-us-Sa'adat* [5] in Persian. His later works [6] analyze the problems of *Fiqh* and duties of Muslim rulers.

Though Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi kept himself aloof from politics, several *'ulama* of Kashmir frequented his *Khanqah*. The most notable among them were Fazil Mulla Muhammad Tahir, Mulla Abul-Fath Kalu, Mulla Yusuf, Mulla Abdun-Nabi and Shaikh Ahmad Mufti.

THE SHRINE COMPLEX

Khanqah-i-Naqshband, intermediate between Khanyar and Nowhatta, is situated on the extreme left road to *Khauja* Bazar. It is that section of Sikandarpur ward, settled by Sultan Sikandar, where Sultan Hussain Chak had made a garden. The initiative to build a *Khanqah* at this place was taken by Khwaja Khawand Mahmud Naqshbandi. Zainul Abidin had erected a *Khanqah* in Asham (Sonawar, Bandipur) on the banks of the river Jehlum in the honour of Saiyid Muhammad Amin Owaisi. After the demise of Saiyid Owaisi in 1484 A.D., the *Khanqah* remained uninhabited for a very long time. In 1633 A.D., Khwaja Mahmud Naqshbandi acquired a legal decree and accordingly the *Khanqah* was pulled down. It was from this rubble that a new *Khanqah* was raised in the garden laid out by Sultan Hussain Chak. An amount of Rs.45000/- was spent on its construction. It is also called the *Khanqah*-i-Khawandia or the *Khanqah*-i-Faiz Panah.

After sometime, Khwaja Khawand Naqshbandi left for Lahore via Delhi. He sent his son Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi to Kashmir to look after and manage the affairs of the *Khanqah*. [7] In Muharram 1085 A.H. / April 1674 A.D., Muinuddin Naqshbandi passed away. He was interred near the *Khanqah* on the northwest side. Thenceforth, his wife herself organized the matters of the *Khanqah*.

In the time of Fazil Khan 1111 A.H./1699 A.D., relic of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was brought to Kashmir by Nuruddin Ishbari. Initially, it was kept in the mausoleum of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi. Later, keeping in view the rush

of the pilgrims and insufficient space, a decision to shift the relic, in consultation with Fazil Khan was ratified. Bagh-i-Sadiq Khan (now the site of Hazratbal) was chosen as its permanent repository.

During the tenure of Governor Shaikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, the fabric of the *Khanqah* was mended. In 1886, Nawab Ahsanullah Khan, whose ancestors were from Nawpora (in Srinagar), sent Rs.2000/- from Dacca in the name of Khwaja Sanaullah Shawl. An inspired Sanaullah, too, contributed a decent sum and collected funds from the people. Later, Nawab Ahsanullah sent an amount of Rs.3000/-. All the money was disbursed and the *Khanqah* was restructured splendidly.

خانقاہ عجیب عالی شان

۱۳۰۴ھ = ۱۸۸۶ء

The date of renovation of the *khanqah* is also contained in the last verse of the following Arabic composition:

يا أخي أقبل بهذا المسجد

طاعةً بالله واسجد واقترب

من بهاء الحق وللدين دائماً

فيه فيضانٌ على من يطلب!

بانيُ الثاني ثناء الله به

صار إيقاناً بأجرٍ يرتقب!

لو أردت عام تعمير الجديد

خانقاه النقشبندی احتسب

A ceiling of *Khatam*band was made and the roof was changed. Thereafter, the *Khanqah*, under the purview of local Auqaf, was renovated from time to time. [8]

The *Khanqah* is single storied, mounting up to a height of 20 feet. It is a beautiful specimen of wooden architecture. The *khatamband* ceiling and lattice-work windows impart it a stately look. Facing the arches is a window affording a panoramic view. Its ornamental wooden tower bears a definite likeness to that

of a palanquin's. The *Khanqah*'s porch has stone flooring. Another feature is its threshold that projects over concrete slabs of stone. One can find office of the local Auqaf on the western side.

The shrine of Muinuddin Naqshbandi is located in the compound of the *Khanqah*. It is single storied. Its pyramidlike sloping roof is three tiered. Over it a tower supports another roof. A spire rises above it. The walls of the shrine are adorned with charming floral, geometric and abstract patterns. The staff of the first *Khalifa* of Islam Abu Bakr is kept as a relic inside the mausoleum. It has been genealogically inherited. Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi, his wife, his son Khwaja Ashrafuddin and grandson Khwaja Nizamuddin are entombed in it. Their gravestones do not carry an epitaph.

POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE SHRINE

The shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin acquired political importance in Kashmir's modern history with the launching of political movement started by the Muslims of Kashmir in the early 1930s. All the martyrs connected with the uprising of Kashmiri Muslims against the Dogra rule on the 13th of July 1931 are buried in the cemetery of this shrine. This graveyard has since been known as Mazar-i-Shuhada. The main political parties of Jammu and Kashmir make it a point to offer *fatiha* at this place on the 13th of July. During the heyday of Kashmir's struggle for the right of self-determination (1955-75), the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin attracted a large number of people on 13th July every year in order to express solidarity with the Plebiscite Front. Even after the Indira-Shaikh Accord of 1975, this shrine presented a grand spectacle on this day of July. Shaikh Abdullah along with his ministers and later Dr. Farooq Abdullah offered *fatiha* at the graveyard. Public speeches, as of now, continue to be made in honour of the martyrs of 13th July. During the period when militant activities were intense in Kashmir, fiery speeches were made by various militant organizations on this day with the main purpose of rousing the sentiments of Kashmiri masses against the government on politico-religious grounds.

The brief history of political activities connected with the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin from 1931 to this day, however,

should not delude us into believing that the shrine has turned into a political centre in modern times. As a matter of fact, this shrine continues to hold religious importance among its devotees, including men and women, who continue to visit it for purposes other than political.

A DAY AT THE SHRINE

The daily religious life at the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi is not different from the rest of the major shrines of Kashmir. The prescribed congregational prayers are offered five times a day, in addition to the Friday prayer attended by considerable number of people.

The number of devotees who pay homage at the *Khanqah* of Naqshband Sahib is quite large. The fact that the Sufi is no longer in flesh and blood does not deter a devotee from visiting the shrine. He is their spiritual guide and the belief prevalent among them is that the Naqshbandi Sufi would never mar the hopes of those who come to seek his guidance. This belief itself is inspiration enough for the countless pilgrims who have been making pilgrimage to his resting place through the ages.

On their way to the shrine, the devotees come across many needy people. The latter's meals are assured. The devotees give them not only money but also eatables like bread, rice, chicken or vegetable pilav etc. So in a way their obligation of *zakat* also gets fulfilled.

The motives for frequenting the shrine vary though the oft-asked wish is the fulfillment of material needs. The request may be for a son, a child of one's own, success in business or personal endeavours, a spouse etc.

Those whose wishes have already been fulfilled give thanks. It was observed that in either case offerings were made, the needy fed and sometimes *tabbaruk* distributed.

A few people can be seen reciting compilation of prayers, selected verses from the Qur'an, *n'at* etc. usually recommended by their pir. Such devotees throng the shrine strictly on the advice of their spiritual guide. Once a middle aged man came with a small brief case containing small booklets of *surah Yasin, Muzzamil, durud-i-Taj* etc. After offering the *zuhr* prayers in congregation, he quietly slipped into one corner and busied himself in reciting the compilation.

Still others can be spotted meditating in one corner. A youth who came on crutches was found introspecting at a secluded spot. Later, somebody told the researcher that a few years back he had taken up arms and was involved in militant activities. He had been injured in one of the military operations and could barely walk. Since then he had put his past behind and was a regular visitor to the shrine. A modern writer aptly remarks 'the belief that pilgrimage is an act of penitence provides a further motive for the pilgrimage...Linked with this is the belief that physical misfortune can have a spiritual cause. In this way, the spiritual and physical motives for pilgrimage can become intermingled. Misfortune can be caused by sin; pilgrimage, as a penitential act, can erase the sin and counteract the misfortune.' [9]

On empirical study, I have formed this idea that no matter what may be the motive of visit; each and every devotee stands united in her or his ardour for the Sufi. Whatever profession pilgrims might be engaged in outside the shrine, but inside it, all adorn different yet same mantles_ be it of a philanthropist giving alms to the poor, a washer washing or sweeping the shrine premises, a supplicant seeking the Sufi's blessings, or a reverent pouring his heart out amidst tears before the revered. It was only at the shrines that I found people of varied interests bound by common faith and ethical values.

THE OCCASION OF *'URS*

It must be pointed out at the outset that two *'urs*es are observed at the shrine of Khwaja Mu'inu'd-Din Naqshband. One is related to Khwaja Bahau'd-Din Naqshband Mushkilkusha who is entombed in Bukhara and the other concerns Khwaja Mu'inu'd-Din Naqshband, entombed in Srinagar. It may sound strange yet true that the shrine of Mu'inu'd-Din Naqshband holds a unique place in Kashmir for preserving the spiritual heritage of the Naqshbandi order to this day. It is the *'urs* of Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband and not of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshband that is celebrated with great devotion and traditional éclat.

The annual *'urs* of Hazrat Naqshband Mushkilkusha falls on 3rd Rabi-ul-Awwal. However, the holy days of *'urs* at the

Khanqah-i-Faizpanah begin on 21st Safar. A complete schedule of the days commemorating the Naqshbandi Sufi's death anniversary starting on the 21st of Safar and lasting till the date of 3rd Rabi-ul-Awwal is advertised for the public interest at large. Devotees are intimated about the offering time of the famous *Khauja Digar* separately.

It is particularly on the occasion of *'urs* of the Naqshbandi Sufi that certain marked characteristics of the religious life and rituals become known to a keen observer. Congregational *khatmat* are organized on a daily basis during the holy days of *'urs*. Scores of devotees assemble at the *Khanqah* premises to attend the *Khatmat* ceremony. The religious assemblages start soon after the *fajr* prayer and go on till forenoon. The shrine resounds with the recitation of *Khatam*-i-Naqshband. Nearly 25,000 devotees may be found present at such assemblages.

The Waqf Board makes every possible effort to lessen discomfiture experienced in a rush. The Board in association with the Electricity Department, the Municipality etc. keeps all the necessary items at the disposal of wayfarers. Special attention is paid to the needs of women pilgrims. Especially, the arrangements on the day of *'urs* are elaborate and devotees are made aware of these through the local media.

2ND RABI-UL-AWWAL

A day prior to the *'urs*, religious conventions are held at the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi. Following the prescribed routine, the first one is held after the *fajr* prayer. It continues till forenoon. The number of ardent devotees only goes on increasing, it being the maximum especially after the *'isha* prayer. Devotees are informed about the timing of the *'isha* prayer on the day of 2nd Rabi-ul-Awwal beforehand. As usual, after the *'isha* prayer, night long recitals commence. The devotees keep themselves awake the entire night. The recitals include verses from the Quran, *khatmat*, *durud*, *n'at*, *munajat* etc. these go on till day break i. e. the *fajr* prayer on the 3rd of Rabi-ul-Awwal.

3RD RABI-UL-AWWAL

3rd of Rabi-ul-Awwal is the day of *'urs*. The religious conventions held after each *fajr* prayer on the days starting 21st Safar conclude. Later, after the *zuhr* prayer, continuing with the tradition, Mirwaiz Maulvi Umar Farouq gives an eloquent oration that lasts till the *'asr* prayer. A separate announcement of the timing of the *'asr* prayer is made through the local dailies.

The day of *'urs* sees devotees thronging the *Khanqah*-i-Faizpanah in large numbers. Pilgrims start arriving early, several thousands at day break to offer the *fajr* prayer in congregation. They pay obeisance and leave. But it is especially at the time of offering the *'asr* prayer that the devotees stay back a little while longer.

The *'asr* prayer on the eve of *'urs* at the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi witnesses a mammoth gathering of people from all walks of life. The *'asr* prayer offered on this day is popularly called the *Khauja Digar*. However, there is nothing unusual about the manner in which the *'asr* prayer is offered at the shrine. The *Khauja Digar* is in no way different from the ordained *'asr* prayer. The only difference is that the *'asr* prayer on the day of annual *'urs* at the *Khanqah*-i-Faizpanah has been termed *Khauja Digar*.

The number of devotees who come to offer the *Khauja Digar* in congregation is so large that the Waqf Board makes arrangement for additional supply of mats. Despite this, pilgrims are requested through local dailies to bring their personal prayer mats along.

The most popular moment is when the *Khauja Digar* is offered, the *'asr* prayer falling on the eve of *'urs*. A huge number of pilgrims gather together in and around the mosque to offer it in congregation. Every space in the mosque, courtyard of the shrine and the lanes of the surrounding market gets filled with devotees eager to offer the *'asr* prayers. They arrive a couple of hours early so as to secure a convenient position in the shrine premises. It is not only the ones living in the vicinity of the shrine who form the majority. In fact, there are several thousands who, traveling from far off places, have only one thing on their minds_ to be a part of the *'urs* festivities and, more importantly, to offer the *Khauja Digar* prayers in congregation at the *Khanqah*-i-Faizpanah. Though the *'asr* prayer is offered on the time prescribed, *Khatmat* and other religious assemblages precede it. Throngs of people start

gathering a wee early to occupy a convenient place.Once the prayer is offered, the pilgrim rush subsides for a while.

After the offering of the *Khauja Digar*, devotees distribute *tabarruk* (sanctified fare) among their fellow devotees. An appeal is made through the local press to bring the *tabarruk* in separate wrappers so as to avoid rush. Further, pilgrims are asked to be in control of themselves and not unnecessarily crowd those distributing the blessed fare.

After the *'asr* prayer (*Khauja Digar*), hallowed gatherings are held once again at the shrine.

KHAUJA DIGAR

The most important and unique aspect of the religious life at the shrine of the Naqshband Sahib is the offering of congregational prayer at the time of *'asr* on the day of *'urs* of Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband. Sources are silent about this distinctive characteristic of Islam in Kashmir. A purely sublime religious devotion of the Kashmiris evolved over centuries past under the influence of Sufi masters of the Naqshbandi order who strictly followed the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

Khauja is the derivative of the Khwaja and *digar* signifies the time of *'asr* in Persian. The fact that Sufism brought about the Central Asian and Persian orientation of Islam in Kashmir can be gauged from the fact that even now Kashmiri Muslims, by and large, continue to use Persian vocabulary for five prescribed times of the daily Islamic prayer (*salat* in Arabic and *namaz* in Persian) viz., for the morning, the Persian *subuh* (Arabic *fajar*), for mid-day, the Persian peshn (Arabic *zuhr*), for the afternoon, the Persian *digar* (Arabic *'asr*), for the evening, the Persian sham (Arabic *maghrib*) and for the night, the Persian *khoftan* (Arabic *'isha*). One wonders how the afternoon prayer, though part and parcel of the fundamentals of Islam, became a distinct symbol of the religious life at the *Khanqah* of Naqshband on the eve of *'urs*. How is it that a fundamental religious duty came to be associated with the name of the Khwaja?

As already mentioned, *Khauja* is a Kashmiri word, a derivative of the Persian Khwaja. *Digar* is the Persian term for *'asr* prayer. The Naqshbandi Sufis are called Khwajagans. Hence in all probability, the term Khwaja got associated with the *'asr*

prayer offered at the shrine of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi on the occasion of annual *'urs*. The exceptionally high number of devotees who offer the *Khauja Digar* in congregation at the shrine goes on to show their high regard and respect for the Naqshbandi Sufi Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband.

Like the celebrations of *Milad* and *M'iraj* at the shrine of Hazratbal, 12 days' preparation precedes the *'urs* of Naqshband Saheb. From 21st Safar to 3rd Rabi-ul-Awwal thousands of devotees throng the shrine. They attend the religious assemblages that start generally at 8 a. m. The recitations at these assemblages include *Khatam*-i-Khwajagan, *Khatam*-i-Lahawlawala and *Khatam*-i-Khwaja Bahauddin Muhammad Naqshband. On the day of *'urs* i.e. 3rd Rabi-ul-Awwal, the same *khatmat* are repeated after the *fajr* prayers. However, as stated earlier, the most dominant feature of the day of *'urs* is the *Khauja Digar*. This prayer, though essentially a fundamental of Islam, may be regarded as the climax of the *'urs* celebrations at the shrine of Naqshband. The devotees are keen to offer this prayer in congregation at the shrine. So the largest congregation at the shrine is the one that is related to *Khauja Digar*. This event attracts not only men but a large number of women as well.

According to Prof. Shamsuddin Ahmad, *Khauja Digar* came into vogue from the days of Khwaja Khawand Mahmud. Prof. Tayub Shah Kamili who has been acting as an *imam* during the time of *Khauja Digar* also expressed the same view when interviewed by this researcher. It, however, seems that during the early days the *Khauja Digar* must have been the prescribed *'asr* prayer rather than *Khauja Digar*. The daily *'asr* prayer on the day of *'urs* seems to have assumed the name of *Khauja Digar* in due course as a result of the growing popularity of the Naqshbandi order in Kashmir. The enrolment of several Kashmiri *'ulama* in the Naqsbandi order must have also prompted various sections of Kashmiri society to participate in the recitation of the *khatmat* preceding the *'asr* prayer on the day of *'urs*.

It follows that essentially the prescribed daily *'asr* prayer in congregation assumed a both a distinctive characteristic and name in the Kashmiri environment. One wonders how Khwaja Khawand Mahmud or for that matter his son, Khwaja Muinuddin would have named the *'asr* prayer the *Khauja Digar* in view of

its being one of the fundamentals of Islam. As a matter of fact, it is on record that Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi would remain engrossed in meditation soon after the *'asr* until the *maghrib* prayer. On this account, the tradition of holding a special assemblage on each Thursday after the *'asr* at the *Khanqah* came into vogue. This assembly is marked by the recitation of *khatmat* and *manaqib* in praise of the Khwaja. A bigger gathering than this is held on the 3rd of every lunar month at the *Khanqah*.

'URS OF KHWAJA MUINUDDIN NAQSHBANDI

Besides the *'urs* celebrations of Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi, the *'urs* of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi is also celebrated with devotional fervour at the *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya. However, the participation of the devotees is not as large as it is on the eve of the former's *'urs*. Unlike the religious assemblies which mark the *'urs* of Khwaja Bahuddin Naqshbandi for 12 days, the *'urs* of Khwaja Muinuddin is observed only on the 29th of Muharram every year. On this day the recitation of *khatmat* viz. *Khatam*-i-Khwajagan, *Khatam*-i-Lahawlawala, *Khatam*-i-Hazrat-i-Khwaja Bahuddin Muhammad Naqshband, *Khatam*-i-Li ilah, *Durud*-i-Najat and *Awradi*-o-Azkar including *n'at* start soon after the morning prayer. *Manqabat* are also recited eulogizing the piety and greatness of Khwaja Bahauddin Muhammad Naqshband.

'URS OF KHWAJA KHAWAND MAHMUD NAQSHBANDI

Every year on the 11th of the month of Shaban, the *'urs* of Khwaja Khawand Mahmud Naqshbandi at the *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya is marked by the recitation of the *Khatam*-i-Khwajagan and *manaqib* in praise of Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshband. *Durud* and *salam* are specially sent to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

'URS OF KHWAJA ALUDDIN NAQSHBANDI

On the eve of *'urs* of Khwaja Alauddin Naqshbandi 10 celebrated on 20th Rajab, a special religious assembly is held at the *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya. The occasion is marked by the

recitation of the *khatam* of Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi in addition to the recitation of *durud* and *salam* for the Prophet (SAW).

GENERAL REMARKS

The *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya has developed a distinct identity of its own among the major shrines of Kashmir. While the other shrines evolved traditions having their origins in the cultural ethos of Kashmir, the *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya preserved its identity as a shrine in conformity with the basic mission of the Naqshbandi order. As is well known, the Naqshbandi Sufis stressed the importance of the *Shari'ah* in every day life, in spite of their adherence to Sufism. As a matter of fact, in their view Sufism and *Shari'ah* were integral to each other. In this regard, they particularly sought to extend their influence to the political circles. They were able to enroll various members of the ruling class as their disciples. This contributed to the wider dissemination of the teachings of the Naqshbandi order among the elite. It was through their emphasis on the importance of *zikr* and the organization of religious assemblies at regular intervals that the Naqshbandi Sufis were able to draw both the elite and the commoners. One noted feature of the *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya is its role in reinforcing its image as the standard-bearer of the *Shari'ah*. Through the recitation of popular *ruba'iyat* of Khwaja Bahuddin Naqshbandi particularly, the *Khanqah*-i-Naqshbandiya has played an important part in revitalizing the concept of *Tawhid* among the devotees. In addition to the religious devotion witnessed at the shrine, collective intonation of these *ruba'iyat* certainly dispels doubts about the alleged heretical beliefs of the devotees of the shrine. Following *ruba'iyat* are reproduced to allay such doubts:

رو در صف دوستانِ ما باش و مترس　　خاک درِ آستانِ ما باش و مترس
گر جمله جهان قصد وجود تو کند　　دل فارغ دار از آنِ ما باش و مترس

یارب بگشای بر من از تو به دری　　بی منت مخلوق رسان ما حضری
در باقی عمر خود چنانم بگذار　　کز من نه رسد به هیچ کس دردسری

رو بہ سر سوزنی نہالی بنشان   تا شاخ کشد چتر زند گرد جہان
بہ ہر شاخی دو فیلِ رہوار بران   گر نہ توانی زکوی ما گیر کران

یارب در خلق سجدہ گاہم نہ کنی   محتاج گدا و پادشاہم نہ کنی
موی سیہم سفید کردی ز کرم   با موی سفید روسیاہم نہ کنی

ای فضل تو دستگیر من دستم گیر   حیران شدہ بخویشتنم دستم گیر
تا چند کنم توبہ و تا کی شکنم   ای توبہ دہ توبہ شکن دستم گیر

یا رب ہمہ مشکلات آسانم کن   آگہ ز دقیقہ ہای ایمانم کن
حقا کہ مرا لاف مسلمانی نیست   من گبر و جہودم تو مسلمانم کن

غمناکم و از در تو باغم نہ روم   جز شاد و امیدوار و خرم نہ روم
از درگہ ہیچو تو کریمی ہرگز   نومید کسی نہ رفت و من ہم نہ روم

اللہ بہ فریاد من بی کس رس   لطف و کرمت یار من بیکس بس
ہر کس بہ کسی و حضرتی می نازد   جز حضرت تو نیست بدین بیکس کس

یارب تو چنان کن کہ پریشان نہ شوم   محتاج برادران و خویشان نہ شوم
بی منت مخلوق مرا روزی دہ   تا از در تو بہ در ایشان نہ شوم

یارب دلِ ما روبہ ہدایت بادا   دور از روشِ اہل ضلالت بادا
یارب ہمگی زیستن و مردنِ من   در مذہب اہل سنت و جماعت بادا

یارب تو اگر کو کنی بدی را چہ شود   در آدمیت دعی ددی را چہ شود
نیکان ہمہ از نیکی خود مقبول اند   مقبول اگر کنی ردی را چہ شود

خود را شکن کہ بت شکستن این است   وز خود بگسل ز قید رستن این است
در گوشۂ خاطر عزیزی جا کن   در مذہب ما گوشہ نشستن این است

یا رب تو درختِ عمر ما پست مکن　　ما را ز شراب ہستی مست مکن
یارب بہ کرم جملہ جوانمردان را　　دل تنگ، پریشان تہی دست مکن

یارب چہ کنم کہ ہیچ کس یارم نیست　　از شرم گنہ زبانِ گفتارم نیست
سر تا سر آفاق بہ ہیچم نہ خرند　　یارب چہ متاعم کہ خریدارم نیست

FOOTNOTES:

1) The Naqshbandi order originated in the land of Turks. The Naqshbandi silsila was first known as Khwajagan. But later it came to be associated with the name of Bahauddin Muhammad Naqshbandi (d.1390), (717-791 A.H./1317-1389 A.D.). The order was chiefly popularised by him. However, Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani may be regarded as the organizer of special tendencies of the Naqshbandi tradition. He formulated the eight rules that governed Tariqat al-Khwajagan or the *tariqa* (way) of the Khwajagan (as mentioned, the name by which the order was known). Bahauddin expanded these rules to eleven. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi orders in Islam*, 1971, Oxford, p.62.
The order was first introduced in India during the time of Babur (d.1530 A.D.). The Indians belonging to the Naqshbandi order trace their spiritual descent to Khwaja Nasiruddin Ubaidullah Ahrar (Ramadhan 806 A.H./1404 A.D.), a prominent successor of Khwaja Bahauddin's disciple Yaqub Charkhi (d.851 A.H./ 1447 A.D.). (S. Trimingham, op. cit.). The real propagator of Naqshbandi order in India, however, is Khwaja Baqi Billah Berang (1563-1603 A.D.), the seventh in succession to Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi.

2. Saiyid Hilal, one of the disciples of Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi, introduced the Naqshbandi order in Kashmir. He came to Kashmir during the rule of Sultan Sikandar. He left only one disciple. His name was Mir Saiyid Amin. In local parlance he is known as Usi Saheb. But he did not enlist any disciple. The order was revived by Khwaja Khawand Mahmud Naqshbandi (11 Shaban 1052 A.H./ 4 November 1642) after more than a century had passed. A. Q. Rafiqi, *Sufism in Kashmir*: *from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century*, n. d., Bhartiya Publishing House, p.129.

3. Rizvi has put forth a thesis that on account of his hostility to the Shiite, Khwaja Khawand Mahmud's role in Kashmir was considered as a "political threat" to the interests of the Mughal empire. S. Athar Rizvi, *A history of Sufism in India*, Vol. 2, 1983, New Delhi, p. 184.

4. Some *'ulama* of Kashmir, Lahore and Delhi worked in close collaboration on *Fatwa-i-Naqshbandiya*. This work, in several respects, was a forerunner of the *Fatwa al-Alamigiriya* compiled by a board of *'ulama* under the personal supervision of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

5. *Mirati-i-Taibiya* and an anthology of his *Kanz-us-Saadaat* in Persian give biographical details about Khwaja Khawand Mahmud.

6. These works seem to have been influenced by Saiyid Ali Hamadani's *Zakhirat-ul-Muluk* and Fazlullah Ruzbihan Ishfahani's *Suluk-ul-Muluk*.

7. Hasan Pir Ghulam, *Asrar-ul-Akhyar*, Urdu translation entitled *Tadhkira-i-Auliya-i-Kashmir*, 1960, Srinagar: Kohinoor Press, p. 67.

8. Muhammad Yusuf Teng (ed.), *Keiashur Encyclopaedia* (in Kashmiri), Vol. 2, 1989, Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, p. 62.

9. P. M. Currie, *The shrine and cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti of Ajmer*, 1992, Oxford, pp.134, 135.

10. A native of Khwarazm, he distinguished himself as the most leading *khalifa* of Khwaja Baha'u'd-Din Naqshaband. After the death of his spiritual teacher, he settled in Chaghaniyan near Hisar-Shadman (Dushanbe in Tajikistan). Both *'ulama* and Sufis regarded him as a leader with great spiritual sensitivity. His own contribution along with his celebrated disciple Maulana Yaqub Charkhi to the development of Naqshbandiya order was enormous. He died in 802/1400. One of his descendants, Khwaja Mahmud Naqshabandi 'Alwi Husaini played a significant role in the spread of Naqshbandiya teachings in Kashmir and at the Mughal court.

VII

The Hazratbal Shrine: Personification of the Holy Relic

The shrine of Hazratbal houses the receptacle for the Prophet's (SAW) sacred hair and hence is an important centre of pilgrimage for the Muslims of Kashmir who have deep veneration for the Prophet (SAW). This is also reflected in their ritual acts at the time of the exhibition of the holy relic. Until the advent of *Ahl-i-Hadith* movement in Kashmir towards the close of the nineteenth century, there were not any differing views about the veneration of the relic by Kashmiri Muslims. With the spread of what was characterized "Wahhabi" ideas[1], a section of Kashmiri Muslims expressed their reluctance over the practice of venerating the relic. They call themselves *Ahl-i-Hadith*[2], though the devotees of the relic who were (and are still) in majority ridicule them for arrogating to themselves such a title. The latter contended that since they also adhere to the *Hadith*, it was unjustifiable on the former's part to call themselves *Ahl-i-Hadith*. Instead, they dubbed their opponents as "Wahhabis".

Leaving aside the controversial issue whether the *Ahl-i-Hadith* of Kashmir are "Wahhabis" or not[3], it is significant that the devotees of Hazratbal shrine have often referred to a number of *hadith* in order to prove their viewpoint regarding the veneration of the holy relic. In this regard, a recent work authored by a Kashmiri writer, adept in Arabic and Persian sources, deserves special mention. The author, Ghulam Rasool Bhat, does not hide the fact in its preface that many individuals approached him to write the book with the aim of establishing

the authenticity of the relic in both historical and religious terms. He refers to the letters received by him from what he calls the 'lovers of the Messenger' (*'Ashiqan-i-Rasul*). Such letters were published in a local Urdu Weekly, the *Shahmir*, edited by Sufi Ghulam Mohiuddin during a period of ten years. The book under reference is actually a sequel to the articles that appeared in the Weekly during that period under the title "*Mui-i-muqqadas*-i-*Nabvi*".[4]

The arrogation of the title "*'Ashiqan-i-Rasul*" by the devotees of the Hazratbal shrine for themselves and that of the "*Ahl-i-Hadith*" by a group of Kashmiri Muslims opposed to the veneration of the holy relic is an important subject not only from religious but also social and historical viewpoints. On the one hand, one can feel the emotion, love and sensitivity involving the thought of the "*Ashiqan-i-Rasool*". On the other, one cannot fail to appreciate the concern of the religious reformist group like the *Ahl-i-Hadith* over the deviations from what they call established or normative practice, the *Shari'ah*. Therefore the Kashmiri Muslims' veneration of the relic needs to be placed in its proper religious and historical perspective. In this regard, it is necessary to know what the authoritative works on *Hadith* and other works related to Islam have to say about the sacred hair of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

ح(١) وَعَنْهُ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُ اَنَّ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا حَلَقَ
رَأْسَهُ كَانَ اَبُوْ طَلْحَةَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَخَذَ مِنْ شَعْرِهِ.

The above *hadith* is from Imam Bukhari:

Once the Prophet (SAW) got his hair cut. Abu Talha, a Companion of the Prophet (SAW), took most of the hair strands (as *tabbaruk*).

ح(٢) اَخرج مسلم عن انس بن مالكؓ اَنَّ رسول اللّٰه اَتیٰ مِنا ناتیٰ
الجمرة فرماها ثم اَتیٰ منزله بمنا و نحر ثُمَّ قال للحلاق خُذو اشارَ الی
جانبه الا يمن ثُمَّ الا يَسا ثُم جعلَ يعطيه الناس.

The *hadith* that follows Imam Bukari is quoted in the work of Imam Muslim:

Imam Muslim's source is Anas bin Malik. According to him, once the Messenger of Allah (SAW) while crossing Mina reached Jumra. After stoning the Satan (*rami*), he returned to Mina where he performed the ritual of sacrificing an animal. He then beckoned the barber to cut his hair... the strands of which were vouchsafed to the companions.

In several biographies on the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), it is recorded that the Prophet (SAW) gifted his sacred hair as *tabarruk* (blessed gift) to his Companions (*ashab*) on some occasions after having a hair cut. Allama Shibli Nomani, the celebrated author of a biography of the Prophet (SAW) writes:

After performing the sacrifice of an animal (*qurbani*) on the eve of Hajjat-ul-wida, the Prophet (SAW) called Mu'amar bin Abdullah, a Companion, and asked him to cut his (SAW) hair. Out of love, the Prophet (SAW) personally handed over some of his trimmed hair to Abu Talha Ansari and his wife Umme Salim. Some Companions who were sitting nearby were also vouchsafed the trimmed hair by the Prophet (SAW). Abu Talha is reported to have himself distributed one or strands of hair to the Muslims around.[7]

'Allama Shibli Nu'mani also refers to other relics gifted by the Prophet (SAW) to the Companions as *tabarruk*. Among these most strands of hair were received by Abu Talha. Besides being vouchsafed the *mui-i-muqqadas*, Ans bin Malik received two gifts from the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) namely *na'lain mubarak* (clogs) and a broken wooden cup mended with silver wire.[8]

Significantly, Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis, the most acknowledged authority on *hadith* during the time of Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahangir highlights the importance of the *mui-i-muqqadas* in spiritual terms by narrating an anecdote related to the Prophet's (SAW) Ascension (*M'iraj*):

The Prophet (SAW) asked Allah on Shab-i-M'iraj as to what Allah had vouchsafed him (SAW) in place of the 600 wings of the Angel Jibrail. The Lord responded that the Prophet's (SAW) single strand of sacred hair was dearer to Him than the 600 wings of Jibrail. Allah further said that thousands of sinners

will be granted protection against the fire of the Hell in lieu of each strand of hair of the Prophet (SAW).[9]

Several chronicles and *tadhkiras* relating to the history of Kashmir make a mention of the arrival of the sacred hair of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to Kashmir. Qalandar Beig is the earliest source that refers to the advent of the sacred hair in Kashmir. A poet and a chronicler, Qalandar Beig chronicled the event in his book *Hujjat*-i-*Qasira*, six months after the arrival of the sacred hair in 1112 A. H./ 1700 A. D. This book was published by Husamuddin Banday under the title of *Madinat-us-Thani* and *Hidayat-ul-Abrar*. The manuscript of the book is preserved in the Directorate of Research and Libraries of the Jammu and Kashmir Government. On a careful reading, it becomes known that neither of the titles of Husamuddin Banday are the real titles of the *Hujjat-i-Qasira*. As a matter of fact, Qalandar Beig uses the term *Madinat-us-Thani*, the second Madina in a different context. As Qalandar Beig writes clearly that Hazratbal should be remembered as *Madinat-us-Thani* because of its being the repository of the sacred hair. [10]

هر کجا موی پاک آں سرور   باشد آنراز عرش دان بهتر
چه عجب گر تو اش همی خوانی   بهر حرمت مدینهٔ ثانی

Wherever is the sacred hair of the Prophet (SAW)
The place should be deemed better than the Heavens

Khwaja Azam Diddamari [11] is the next chronicler to write about the sacred hair of the Prophet (SAW). He refers to Qalandar Beig's well known verse that describes the date of arrival of the sacred hair in Kashmir.

محتاجان را بوقت حاجت طلبی   موی مدد است یا رسول عربی
تاریخ نزول با یکے هاتف گفت   "کشمیر بشد مدینه از موی نبی"

Given the fame of Qalandar Beig as a poet and a disciple of Shaikh Muhammad Radhu Chishti[12], it is important to know that he composed the above verse under the direction of his

spiritual preceptor. This is evident from the following verses of Qalandar Beig.[13]

حال تشریف موی پیغمبرؐ   نظم سازم برشتهٔ چون گوهر
شدم از شیخ خود بدین مامور   هست مامور عاقبت معذور
شیخ من شیخ اهلِ صدق و داد   قطبِ حق حضرت محمد راد
آنکه اندر رهِ خدا دانی   اولیاء کبار را ثانی
یکه تاز سلوکِ راهِ خدا   هادیٔ کاملان و راهنما
ملکِ کشمیر ز فیض او پر نور   همچو عالم ز مهر پرتو هور
فیض او عام مثلِ خورشید است   بنده را زو همیشه اُمید است
که بریزد بکامِ من آن شاه   جرعهٔ لا الٰه الا اللّٰه
تا چو در دهر یادگار بود   راقمم بو که کردگار بود
من ندارم وسیله از حسنات   شاید اینم شود دلیل نجات
لطف و اکرام سیّد عالم   چه عجب گر نکو کند حالم
یا الٰهی بگلشن صلوٰة   به یاسمین عطر و تسلیمات
تو مشامِ نبی معطر ساز   آل و اصحاب اهلِ بینش باز

From the above verses, two points come up. First, Mirza Qalandar Beig versified the date of arrival of *mui-i-muqqadas* at the command of his spiritual guide, Shaikh Radhu. He thought it to be a noble deed of lasting value and hoped to attain salvation on this ground alone on the Day of Judgement. Second, Qalandar Beig's eulogization of his spiritual guide testifies to the role of a prominent Sufi of Kashmir in highlighting the importance of the sacred hair in the Valley.

Qalandar Beig refers to various works and his conversations with some reliable persons regarding the history of the sacred hair preserved in the Hazratbal shrine.[14]

در بیاض صحائف ساده   ز سواد و وقائع جاده
حال تشریف موئ پاک رسول   از زبان ثقات شد منقول
خامه میدانش آن به نیکی طاق   میکنم ذکر او درین اوراق

According to Qalandar Beig, the sacred hair was in the possession of Saiyid Abdullah, the custodian of the Prophet's (SAW) tomb in Madina. He describes the Saiyid as a descendent of the Prophet's (SAW) family (*ahl-i-bait*). He further writes that the relic had been preserved in the family as ***tabarruk*** from the time of Imam Hasan, the grandson of the Prophet (SAW). In 1044 A. H. / 1634 A. D., Saiyid Abdullah's relations with his cousin, Saiyid Hashim, got strained. He was summoned by the Governor to present himself at his court. Following his defiance of the order, Saiyid Abdullah was deported. Travelling far and wide, he finally reached Hindustan. It so happened that after living in Hindustan for several years, the Saiyid's sons found themselves in dire straits. In order to repay a loan, they decided to sell the holy hair of the Prophet (SAW) along with its caretaker to Nuruddin Ishbari, a rich merchant hailing from Kashmir. The spies, however, informed Aurangzeb about the incident once Ishbari left for Kashmir. Hence the relic accompanied by its caretaker was presented to the Mughal Emperor. The latter commanded that the holy relic be kept in the Khanqah of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti. But barely nine days had passed than Aurangzeb had a vision of the Prophet (SAW) in his dream who told the former to dispatch the relic to Kashmir. Accordingly, the relic was brought back from Ajmer and preparations were made to send it to its rightful owner and abode. No sooner did the relic reach Kashmir than the news of its arrival spread like wildfire. Innumerable ardent devotees of the Prophet (SAW) crowded round it. It was kept in the Khanqah of Khwaja Muinuddin Naqshbandi. Shaikh Muhammad Radhu was the first to unveil it resplendently.

Apart from Qalandar Beig's detailed report of the spiritual importance of the sacred relic, his eyewitness' description of the advent of the sacred relic is of great historical value. Equally important is his account about his spiritual guide Shaikh Muhammad Radhu Chishti who showed immense veneration for the relic. The reverential act by a Sufi of Shaikh Muhammad

Radhu's stature certainly established the tradition of venerating the relic publicly in Kashmir; this despite the fact that such relics are said to have been preserved either in private custody or in some sacred places in other Muslim societies. This distinguishable feature of Islam in Kashmir may also be attributed to a great deal of importance given by Qalandar Beig to the sacred hair as the authentic relic of the Prophet (SAW). An anecdote narrated by Qalandar Beig is worthy of reflection in this regard.

An intoxicated soul whom Qalandar Beig describes as the lover of the Prophet (SAW) after having *ziyarat* (glimpse) of *mui-i-muqqadas* resorted to *muraqaba* with the main object of knowing the actual truth about the relic. In this state he had a vision of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He entreated the Prophet (SAW) to satiate his spiritual quest. The latter (SAW) responded that the sacred relic was a part of his (SAW) hair on the right side and that whosoever invoked it would be freed from anxiety and worry. Qalandar Beig observes that several other lovers of the Prophet (SAW) had this vision in a state of *muraqaba*.[15]

بادہ نوشی از راہ کشف و شہود   بہر تحقیق ماندہ سر بسجود
از رسالت مآب کرد سوال   شان این مو چگونہ دارد حال
یافت ارشاد از نبی امینؐ   موئی گیسوی ما بود ز یمین
سائلی مو زمن طلب بمود   دارمش تا ز رنج و غم آسود
داند گر گفت کای بشیر و نذیر   بہر این مو بگن بما تعبیر!
گفت اَبشِر فَاِنَّهُ مِنّا   وَالِهُ قال منحة مِنّا
جزء چہل و ششم بود زویا   از نبوت بقیہ در دُنیا
ختم شد آں و این بود باقی   در جہاں تا بشر بود باقی
این نبوت شناس وحی خفی   غالباً بہر مومنان صفی

Qalandar Beig further relates his own spiritual experience. He tells us that he was spiritually commanded to name his book

Hujjat-i-Qasira. He enumerates the following as the characteristics of the sacred relic:

1. The more people would have *ziyarat* of the relic, the more will their faith increase and fortify.
2. Whosoever has a *ziyarat* of the Prophet's (SAW) sacred hair would be deemed to have seen him (SAW).
3. Whosoever recites *durud* and salutations with faith while having *ziyarat* of the relic, the Prophet (SAW) will not only accept the same but also respond to him positively. [16]

هست در شرع و پیش عرف انام   ''حجت قاصرہ'' مر این را نام
دل بدو یا چو کرد اطمینان   نامش افتاد ''انی'' از برهان
بتواتر چو مردمان دیدند   بیقین جیب و دست ببریدند
آن یکی دید سرور عالمؐ   داند گر هم چنین نه بیش و نه کم
که درین ملک به سرید آمد   خنده زن با جوان و پیر آمد
هرکه اندر تحیه اُستادی   وَعَلیک جواب او دادی
هست رؤیا و کشف برهانی   از تواتر فرو چو ایقانی
شک نیا ورد مسلم و ذمی   بد و برهان اِنّی و لِمّی
هست اِنّی ز روی و کشف وشهود   لم آن ز امتحان سلطان بود
هست انّی مقدم اندر دین   زانکه ایمان بغیب شد تعیین
کرد بوبکرؓ بی سند تسلیم   امر پروردگار حی قدیم
زین سبب هست اوّل الابرار   مصطفیؐ را رفیق، همدم و یار
پایهٔ صدق پایهٔ والاست   صادق اندر زمانه بے همتا ست
صلوٰة و سلام حی قدیم   بر نبیؐ و بر آل و صحب عظیم

From the above account, it is clear that Qalandar Beig as a contemporary poet and a disciple of the noted Sufi, Shaikh Muhammad Radhu, with the spiritual experiences of his peers as well as his personal ones contributed a great

deal to the veneration of the sacred relic in the consciousness of Kashmiris.

Khwaja Azam Diddamari is another contemporary chronicler who gives an eye witness account of relic's arrival. While Mirza Qalandar Beig was affiliated to Chishti order of Sufism, Diddamari was a disciple and *khalifa* of Khwaja Muhammad Murad Tang. The latter was a well known Sufi of the Naqshbandi order in Kashmir. Diddamari was just seven or eight years old when the sacred relic was brought to Kashmir. He corroborates the account of Qalandar Beig in several respects but strikes a personal note in these words:

"I still remember when the blessed relic reached Kashmir. At that time the Muslims of Kashmir crowded reverentially reciting *durud*. Men and women in all sincerity and love were ecstatic as if a sea of humanity was present. In every street and lane, scores of people with their loud recitations of *durud* and azkar made their presence felt. The *'ulama, fuzala, mashaikh* and *fuqara* of Kashmir waited for their turns to carry the holy relic (kept in a box) on their shoulders." [17]

Khwaja Muhammad Azam Diddamari writes that he heard the story about the spiritual significance of the sacred relic from Khwaja Nuruddin Mohammad Aftab Naqshbandi[18]. According to him, once Khwaja Ahmad Yassavi after having a *ziyarat* of *mui-i-muqqadas* had recourse to the practice of muraqaba. He had a vision of the Prophet (SAW) during the state of contemplation. To the Khwaja's query, the Prophet (SAW) replied that the relic belonged to the part of his hair. Diddamari says that such anecdotes about the authenticity of the sacred relic were current in his times and that it was difficult for him to write about the plethora of such evidence.

Haji Muhammad Aslam Mun'ami Kashmiri in his *Gauhar-i-'Alam*[19] supplies the same information regarding the arrival of the blessed relic in Kashmir. He, however, adds that there was unanimity of views among the spiritual elite of his time regarding the authenticity of the sacred hair.

A non-Muslim chronicler who wrote his *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* during the Sikh rule (1819-1846 A. D.) also gives some interesting information about the arrival of the relic in the Valley. The manuscript of this work is preserved in the Sanskrit section of the Directorate of Libraries and Research.

This work is written in old Hindi nagri script. Since the earlier portion of this work is missing, it is difficult to say anything about it author. Ghulam Rasool Bhat, however, thinks that this work is of great historical importance. It is clear from this work that its author was well acquainted with the advent of the sacred hair in Kashmir. Following passage quoted by Bhat is reproduced in original:

> ”جب فاضل خان کشمیر کو آیا۔ راج کرنے لگا۔ لوگوں کو سکھ دیتا بھیا۔ اچھی ریت چلانی۔ اگلیوں حاکموں کے ظلم بھی دُور کی تے تھے......اور اس کے سمے میں کونی خواجے نورالدین ناما اِشبر گرام کا ارتھات جہاں گپت گنگا ہے، تیسنے کو اِشبر کہتے ہیں، یہاں کا ہی رہنے والا وہ خواجے نورالدین نام، اِسے فاضل خان نے بیوپار کے واسطے دکھن کو بھیجا ہوا تھا۔ جب وہ پرت کرکے کشمیر کے طرف آرِتا ہویا۔ بیجے پور پہنچایا تھا۔ تیسنے سمے عرب دیش سے مسلمانوں نے محمدؐ کا وال لایا تھا۔ جس کو مسلمان لوگ ”مونے شریف“ کہتے ہیں۔ پھر اِس خواجے نورالدین بیوپاری نے مونے شریف والیوں مسلمانوں کے نال اپنے نوکروں کو دھن خرچتے چرچتے ہی کشمیر کو بھیجا۔ وہی ”مونے“ مسلمانوں نے حضرت بل کے جگہ وِشے رکھا ہے۔ پھر وہ خواجے نورالدین بیوپاری بھی عالم گیر کے ملنے واسطے گیا تھا، پھر کونی دِن وہاں رہ کر مرت ہویا تھا، پھر وہ اُس کا مرِتک شریر بھی بادشاہ نے کشمیر کو بھیج دیا تھا۔ اَرُو راستے کے وِشے وہ مونے شریف والے بھی ملے تھے۔ اُن کے نال ہی چلے آنے تھے۔ جب یہ مونے شریف کشمیر وِشی پہنچا، کشمیر والیوں مسلمانوں نے بہت اُتسو منایا تھا، اور فاضل خان نے بھی بہت آذر کیا تھا۔ اَرُو جانو کہ جس صندوق وِشے وہ بال تھا، وہ صندوق لوگوں کے سروں اُوپر ہی چلتا تھا۔ ایسے ہی بڑے اُتسو سے مسلمانوں نے وہ حضرت بل میں پہنچایا ہے تھا۔“

Following passage is, therefore, reproduced from G. R. Bhat's information regarding the sacred hair in these words:

ترجمہ: جب فاضل خان (۱۱۰۹ھ میں) کشمیر کا گورنر (یہ عہد اورنگ زیب عالم گیر) بن گیا، تو اُن نے ملک میں عدل وانصاف کے ساتھ حکومت کی۔ لوگوں کو کافی حد تک راحت اور سکھ پہنچایا۔ اُس نے اچھے طریقہ سے حکومت کی۔ اپنے سے قبل کشمیر کے گورنروں کے ظلم وزیادتیوں کو دُور کیا۔ اسی (فاضل خان) کے زمانے میں کوئی خواجہ نورالدین نام کا آدمی جو اِشبر گاؤں کا یعنی جس کو گپت گنگا کہا جاتا ہے، اُسی کو اِشبر کہتے ہیں، وہ اُسی جگہ کا رہنے والا تھا۔ خواجہ نورالدین نام کے آدمی کو اِسی فاضل خان نے بیوپار کے لئے دکھن کو بھیجا ہوا تھا، جب وہ دکھن سے کشمیر کی طرف واپس آرہا تھا تو وہ بیجاپور (ہندوستان) پہنچا۔ اُس عہد کے قریب عرب دیش سے مسلمانوں نے محمد رسول اللہ ﷺ کا بال لایا تھا، جس کو مسلمان لوگ "موئے شریف" کہتے ہیں۔ پھر اُسی خواجہ نورالدین بیوپاری نے اُن موئے شریف والے مسلمانون کے ساتھ اپنے نوکروں کو روپیہ خرچتے خرچتے کشمیر بھیجا اور اُسی موئے شریف کو مسلمانوں نے حضرت بل کی خانقاہ میں رکھا ہے۔ پھر وہ خواجہ نورالدین بیوپاری بھی عالم گیر بادشاہ کے ملنے کے لئے گیا تھا اور وہاں کئی دِن رہا اور اِسی دوران اُس کی وفات ہوئی۔ بادشاہ عالم گیر نے بعد میں اُس کی نعش کو بھی کشمیر بھیج دیا اور راستے میں وہ موئے شریف کو لیجانے والے بھی اُن سے مل گئے اور پھر وہ اُن کے ساتھ ہی چلے۔ جب یہ موئے شریف کشمیر پہنچا تو اِس دوران کشمیر کے مسلمان لوگوں نے بہت خوشی منائی۔ کشمیر کے اُس وقت کے گورنر فاضل خان بھی خوش ہوئے اور اُس نے اِس کی بڑی عزت وتعظیم کی۔ جاننا چاہئے کہ جس وقت موئے شریف کشمیر لایا جارہا تھا اور جس صندوق (محمل) میں وہ موئے شریف تھا وہ صندوق لوگوں کے سروں کے اوپر ہی چلتا تھا، یعنی وہ صندوق لوگ اپنے سروں پر اُٹھائے ہوئے بڑی عزت، تعظیم اور ذوق وشوق سے لوگوں کے جمِ غفیر کو عبور کرکے لیے جارہے تھے، خوشی اور مسرت حاصل کرکے مسلمانوں نے بڑی عقیدت کے ساتھ اس کو حضرت بل پہنچایا۔"

Other writers who have given a detailed description of the sacred relic's importance are Mulla Bahauddin Mattu [22] and Abdul Wahhab Nuri. [23] The former, besides being a poet, hagiographer and chronicler, was affiliated to the Naqshbandi order. He corroborates and supplements the information given in the sources mentioned above regarding the importance of the holy hair of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He writes about his personal experience at the spiritual level on the eve of Shab-i-M'iraj[24]:

بنده هم نوبتی شبِ معراج	بوده ام چون ستاره وهاج
همه شب زنده بادل پُر خون	بنشستم بمنبر حجرهٔ خاص
صبح دم بادل پُر آز اخلاص	که بود آفتاب ازو ذره
آفتابی بر آمد از حجره	که بود آفتاب ازو ذره
من ازان شعشعه ز خود رفتم	الوداعی بهوش خود گفتم
در زمان خادمی ز حجرهٔ نور	کرد آثار را بیرون به بلور
این همه واقعات دل جوئیست	مشتمل بر صفات آن موئیست

"Once on the eve of Shab-i-M'iraj, I was awake along with others at the *dargah* of Hazratbal. All through the night I was flooded with tears. In the morning, I went towards the abode of the sacred relic and sat down. In a state of contemplation I saw the sun rising from the chamber in whose comparison the (ordinary) sun appeared just a ray. Wonderstruck by the glitter, I was lost to this world. When I regained consciousness, I found myself bidding farewell (to *Nur-i-Muhammadi*). And simultaneously I saw the custodians taking out the sacred hair from its abode for exhibition. All the events revealed (to me) are authentic..."

Shaikh Abdul Wahhab Nuri, a hagiographer and a Sufi of the Kubrawi order, in his well known work has described the history of the holy relic emphatically. He narrates the experience of Mirza Farhad Beig, a relative and a disciple of the well known Kubrawi Sufi Mirza Akmaluddin Badakshi. Although Bahauddin Mattu has versified the spiritual experience of Farhad Beig, Abdul Wahhab Nuri records it lucidly:

میرزا فرهاد بیگ:

"خورد سال بود که به تحصیل علوم در پیش مولوی عبدالعزیز مشغول بود و به همراه وی بشرف صحبت واخذ بیعت آنجناب سرافراز گشت [مرید حضرت شیخ اکمل الدین محمد کامل بدخشیؒ، حول] و به تلقین او کار و اوراد و وظائف و بهره مند شد۔ به منصب ولایت رسید۔ ظهور خوارق کثیره کردید۔

وهم وی گفته [میرزا فرهاد بیگ] که روزی با ثار مبارک (حضرت بل) میرفتم، مردم از دیدن موی مقدس نبویؐ فارغ شده بودند، کسی می گفت که الحال خانان بخانه های خود رفتند، دیدن رویت میسر نخواهد آمد۔ بغایت دل تنگ شدم و احوال من متغیر گشته، آهی بر کشیدم و بسان مرغ نیم بسمل بخاک می غلطیدم۔ درزمان جناب مقدس رسالت علیه من الصلوٰة اتمها ومن التحیات اکملها جلوه گر شد و حل مقبوض من، منبسط شد و طائر روح من از مضیق فرق بوسعت آباد جمع پر و بال کشاده بزبان حال مضمون این نعره در داد.....فرد۔

این که می بینم به بیداریست یا رب یا بخواب
خویشتن را در چنین نعمت پس از چندین عذاب

چون بخود آمدم شکر و سپاس حضرت رب العزة تعالیٰ شانهٗ بجا آورده این قطعه بر زبانم جاری شد۔

رباعی

دیدن روی محمدؐ هر که است   که قناعت او بموی می کند
هر که در دریای وحدت غرق شد   که سر خود خم بجوی میکند

"From early childhood, he (Mirza Farhad Beig) busied himself in seeking knowledge from Maulvi Abdul Aziz and at the same time was enrolled as the disciple of Shaikh Akmaluddin Badakshi. He reached the stage of *wilaya* (territory assigned to a *Khalifa* by his preceptor for carrying on the spiritual mission of his particular Sufi order) after receiving guidance from him in respect of *awrad*, *wazaif* and *azkar*. Many miracles have been attributed to him. He says that one day he was going to Hazratbal: 'When I reached there, I found the devotees of the shrine bound for their homes after having *ziyarat* of the sacred hair. Somebody told me that since the custodians of the shrine had already left for their home, the sacred hair would not be exhibited. So I began to cry in despair...In the meanwhile, the Messenger

(SAW) of Allah appeared before me. My wish got fulfilled and my grief turned into pleasure. Conscious as I was of the liberation of my elevated spirit from the body, I said: 'My Lord! What am I seeing? Is it a dream or a reality? How lucky am I! You have blessed me after despondency.' "

Pir Hasan Shah[26] has discussed at length the events associated with the arrival of the holy hair in the Valley. His information is based on earlier sources, though some new information furnished by him is noteworthy:

1. The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb granted the revenue of three villages to the custodian of the *dargah* for its maintenance.
2. As long as Shaikh Muhammad Radhu was alive, he exhibited the sacred relic. After his death no one dared show the same to the devotees. It was not until the wealthy and respectable individuals unanimously decided that Khwaja Nuruddin's son-in-law, Khwaja Balaqi Banday, alone had the right to unveil the relic. Since then it is the descendents of Khwaja Balaqi Banday who have been rendering this service.
3. During the earlier phase of its history in Kashmir, the sacred relic was exhibited on two occasions. These were the *Shab-i-Mi'raj* and *Eid-i-Milad*. The relic was exhibited for three days. Later, in deference to the wishes of the public, it was decided to display the relic on the eve of the anniversaries of the four rightly guided Caliphs (*Khulafa-i-Rashidin*).

Not only Pir Hasan, but earlier chroniclers, Muhammad Khalil Mirjanpuri[27], and Sa'du'llah Shahabadi[28], also testify to the spiritual experiences of some revered *'ulama* and Sufis with regard to the authenticity of the holy relic. However, they refer to the sacrilege caused to the relic by the Afghan Governor Azad Khan. It is said that the governor wanted to know whether the sacred relic was a real one. So he decided to take the sacred hair out of its container. He intended to test its authenticity by exposing it to fire. He thought that if the strand was really the Prophet's (SAW) hair it would not catch fire.

Accordingly, he tried to pull the holy hair out of the container but failed in his attempt. Thereupon, he employed all force to take it out with the result that it was ripped into two unequal parts. The smaller one almost resembles a dot. Azad Khan, though a tyrant, felt aghast. Forty days after this event, Azad Khan in an encounter with Islam Khan at Poonch committed suicide. The latter beheaded Azad Khan and sent the head of the rebel governor and a tyrant to his king in Kabul.

It is, therefore, not difficult to understand why the Kashmiri Muslims have recognized the *dargah* of Hazratbal as the most important shrine in the Valley. It is not merely the historicity and spirituality associated with the sacred relic that gives the Hazratbal shrine a primary importance, but also, the fact that it inspired a host of hagiographers, chroniclers, poets and other literary figures to play a significant role in the dissemination of the ideas concerning its veneration. The shrine of Hazratbal not only inspired the Kashmiri poets, hagiographers, historians and several respectable persons to pen down their experiences about its significance, but even prompted scholars of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and *Hadith* to praise its central importance in the religious life of Kashmiri Muslims. One notable example is provided by Shaikh Ahmad Wa'iz.

An orator par excellence, Shaikh Ahmad was also known for his profound knowledge of *fiqh* and *Hadith*. Author of several works related to *Hadith*, commentaries on *Kibriyat-i-Ahmar*, *Awrad-i-Fathiya* etc. he composed a *qasida* in Arabic in praise of the shrine of Hazratbal[29]. Some verses in original Arabic are produced here with translations:

قد بدا الشمس النبوة ضحو الآثار الشريف
قد حكى الاعجاز حقاً فحوى الآثار الشريف
يا سكارى احبّ رومُو ضحو الآثار الشريف
بالبدن والروح صيروا محو الآثار الشريف
أيها العشاق سيروا نحو الآثار الشريف

O! Saturated with ecstatic love
O! Claiming to be overcome with the mystical love for Muhammad (SAW)

The Sun of the prophethood has risen in Aasar-i-Sharif
Come, get ecstatic in his remembrance
Be engrossed in extolling his qualities and virtues
Circumambulate this sacred place
O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

قد نأى منكم منازل حبكم وزيارة
قد تجلى للقلوب الوالهة الوارة
إن يفتكم بقية هالة لح أثارة
فيه انزال السكينة كالمدينة للأسيف
أيها العشاق سيروا نحو الآثار الشريف

Indeed, you crave the destination of your love, his city (Aasar-i-Sharif)
Indeed, the broken and grief-stricken hearts receive light from his Light
If your hearts remain near that light
They will remain contented
As the rain is a blessing for the barren land
O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

فيه من أشعاره شعر شريف طيب
ممطر البركات في الموين سحاب صيب
مرجع للأولياء منهم رجال غيب
محضر الأملاك حقا لم يزل منهم حفيف
أيها العشاق سيروا نحو الآثار الشريف

This place that is called Aasar-i-Sharif
Seated there is the sacred hair
A true personification of grace that bestows blessings day and night
This is a place that has been acknowledged as their haven by *auliya* and pious

O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

وَهُوَ خَتْمُ الْمُرْسَلِين لَا نَبِي بَعْدَهُ
هَذَا أَكَّدَ خَبَرَ اللهِ وَيَصْدِق وَعْدَهُ
لَيْسَ يُمْكِنُ مِثْلَهُ لَا يَبْعُدْ أَحَدٌ سَعْدَهُ
مُرْسَلٌ لِلْعَلَمِين بِالرَّحْمَةِ وَالدِّين الحَنِيف
أَيُّهَا الْعُشَّاق سِيرُوا نَحْوَ الآثَارِ الشَّرِيف

He is the 'Seal of the prophets'
After him (SAW) will come no *nabi*
This is what Allah has stated in the Quran
And Allah has proved Himself true to His word
There is no like of him
None can attain his exalted status
He is the 'Grace of the Worlds'
And as the Messenger brought the primodial religion
O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

شَعْرُ فَخْرِ الْمُرْسَلِ طُرًّا خَيْرُهُمْ خَيْرِ الْبَشَر
لَيْلَةَ الْمِعْرَاجِ حَقًّا قَدْ رَأَى اللهَ بِالْبَصَر
مَنْ رَآهُ قَدْ رَأَى الْحَقَّ كَمَا وَرَدَ الْخَبَر
مَنْ يَفُتْهُ رُؤْيَةٌ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الشَّعْرَ الْمُنِيف
أَيُّهَا الْعُشَّاق سِيرُوا نَحْوَ الآثَارِ الشَّرِيف

This sacred hair belongs to the Pride of the prophets
(Who was) the best of the created
Who saw Allah with his own eyes
Whosoever has seen him (SAW)
Has had the *ziyarat* of Allah
One need not despair
Come to Hazratbal and have a glance at
the Prophet's (SAW) hair
Certainly, then, you have had the glimpse of his
sacred face

O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

فِي سَنة تسع وَمائة بَعد الف قد وصل
بَلدة الكشمير منه يمن وَالبر له حصل
كل داء او غلاء انفصل
كثر الازهار اصنافا وَالاشجار الغرايف
ايها العشاق سيروا نحو الاثار الشريف

What a good fortune!
The sacred hair sanctified Kashmir
It reduced disease, troubles and ignominy
Produced a variety of flowers
Propelled forestation and plantation
O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

شعر ختم المرسلين مذ الى الكشمير جا
قد فتح ابواب رزق وَالاجابه وَالرجا
كل ذي كرب وَهم من همومه قد نجا
حسنت احوال كل لا يرى رجل لطيف
ايها العشاق سيروا نحو الاثار الشريف

By making Kashmir as its abode,
the sacred hair of 'The Seal of
the prophets'
Opened for its inhabitants the gates
of sustainable nourishment,
prayers and hopes
Improved everyone's condition
The grief-stricken were delivered from insolvency
If you are anguished (so come)
O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

قد شعرنا قد علمنا رَبّ بالعقل السليم
من شعائر دينک الاسلام ذالشعر الكريم
فاعفُ عنا يا خطايانا جميعا يا رحم
يا النبي المصطفى ارحم على شيخ ضعيف
أيها العُشّاق سيرُوا نحوَ الآثار الشريف

O our Nourisher! We understood Islam with full senses
Through that Paragon of Virtue whose sacred hair is here
Be kind to this humble servant
O lovers! Proceed towards Aasar-i-Sharif

From the above it becomes clear why the shrine of Hazratbal became an important element in the religious life of the people of Kashmir. Several folk songs and poems composed in Kashmiri in praise of the relic attribute the privileges of Madina to Hazratbal. While one is struck by the pristine purity of religion in Madina, it may be asked whether the Hazratbal's comparison with Madina is justifiable. From the religious standpoint, the devotees' elevation of Hazratbal to Madina-i-Thani cannot be justified. However, from both historical and sociological viewpoints, the elevation of Hazratbal is worthy of examination. As a modern historian writes on this point: "...this must have sprung not only from the devotees' unbounded veneration of the Prophet but also from practical difficulties in performing the sacred duty of the hajj. Hajj was beyond their reach owing to the abject poverty in which they lived through centuries of misrule and oppression. A visit to the shrine would, at least, have reduced in the devotees' religious consciousness (the apparent difference of) the physical barriers between the Arab and 'Ajam." [30] This sentiment is reflected in the following verses quoted by the historian in support of his argument:

"Whosoever has seen the sacred hair of
Muhammad (SAW),
has had in reality the vision of the Prophet
[although] he is entombed in Arabia,
his sacred hair sanctifies the 'ajam
he reveals the eternal reality of his radiance only to those

in Kashmir
who have an abiding faith and are spiritually
illuminated"[31]

It is thus a kind of mystical love for the Prophet (SAW) that makes the holy relic an object of veneration. The holy relic has been personified by the devotees. This is evident by the following verses:

"Hurry up, hurry up! Proceed towards Hazratbal
it is there that the truth of the Prophet's radiance will
unravel itself.
What a blessedness! The sacred hair,
[which] is enthroned there with glory,
the majestic king [the Prophet] has himself come there;
along with his four [illustrious] companions." [32]

The shrine of Hazratbal is"actually a place of interaction and communication between the spiritually alive Prophet and his followers. It is a *sui generis* system of signification." [33] Ishaq Khan, however, tends to create this impression that the veneration of relic, among other factors such as stated above, is also attributable to Kashmiris' ancestral Buddhist practices of adoring holy relics. It is a fact that ancient "beliefs comprising a given culture have important functions for the social structure and personality of the people and, indeed, continue to survive in spite of seemingly historical upheavals". [34] But a deeper exploration into this phenomenon reveals that it would not be always correct to overemphasize the importance of ancient Buddhist practices on the Kashmiris' mind. My examination of hitherto unutilized sources shows the veneration of the holy relic to be free from the Buddhist influence. It is not just in folk literature and poetry that we come across plethora of evidence concerning the veneration of the relic but significantly religious scholars adept in jurisprudence did not lag behind the masses in the veneration of the Prophet's hair. The Arabic verses of Shaikh Ahmad Waiz quoted above illustrate the point. Besides, pious Sufis played an important role in reinforcing the theological as well as popular belief in the sacredness of the holy hair.

More importantly, we need to take note of the changing perceptions of the devotees towards the holy relic over long periods of history. Kashmiri Muslims' veneration of the relic cannot be explained from a perspective alien both to Islam and even commoners' understanding of Islam. While asking several devotees whether they worshipped Allah or the Prophet or the holy relic, answer was the same. "We worship Allah and none else." "But why do you approach the shrine or the place where the relic is housed with lowly obeisances and folded hands? Are not such practices akin to the Hindus or Buddhists?" asked this researcher. They responded: "We believe in Allah i.e. one God. They believe in many. We bow before Allah only during the five time prescribed *namaz*. Yes, we make obeisance with folded hands but there is nothing extraordinary in such acts of behaviour. Such acts are spontaneous since the very idea of the Prophet (SAW) commands respect from believers. You may call it a matter of pure or unqualified respect for our beloved Prophet (SAW). Is not the practice of reading *durud* on hearing the name of the Prophet (SAW) an established one? Doesn't the Quran say that Allah Himself and the angels recite the praise of the Prophet (SAW)? [35] If such is the exalted status of the Prophet (SAW) in the estimation of Allah and, indeed, on *'arsh*, why would we shirk from indulging in reverential acts in addition to the recital of *durud* and *salam*? Our ritual behaviour is poles apart from the Buddhists and the Hindus on approaching the precincts of the shrine. Their shrine is an object of worship. But for us a shrine is just a sacred place where we come closer to Allah through our individual or collective acts of veneration of the Prophet (SAW) in accordance with the Islamic traditions promoted by our pious ancestors in the past." "But the holy relic of the Prophet (SAW) is nowhere exhibited by the priest in a manner that involves one's participation in an activity so ritualistic?" I enquired. "We hear of holy relics in other Muslim societies. In other societies they form a part of collection of a national museum or some individual, but here the relic is displayed in a manner necessitating the performance of acts of ritual devotion not sanctioned in the Quran and the *Sunnah*?", I queried further. A commoner had no answer to the last two questions. However, the highly educated not only defended the acts of devotion at the Hazratbal from the viewpoint of the Quran, *Hadith* and

Sufism, but also provided useful insights for understanding the ritual phenomenon at the shrine from various perspectives. Here a brief summary and analysis of the views based merely on my interviews with some highly educated Kashmiri Muslims is given as a prelude to my later description of the life and rituals at the shrine of Hazratbal.

We need to closely study the spiritual and social acts at the shrine of Hazratbal in totality for recoginising their historical role with regard to Islam so as to not draw superficial comparisons between the ritual acts of its devotees and those of the Hindu or Buddhist shrines. The Hindu-Buddhist ambience of the Valley, though important in a certain historical sense, for providing a perspective for understanding the ethos of Kashmiri Muslim society and culture cannot be regarded as a propeller of the devotees' veneration of the holy relic. Significantly, a devotee, though well aware of the criticism of the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and the *Jamat*-i-*Islami* for his alleged act of indulging in *shirk*, considers himself to be a better Muslim than the avowed claims of the religious reformist. The thesis that comes up after taking into consideration every kind of claim about a good Muslim or dismissal of a Muslim as a *mushrik* [36] or a 'Wahhabi' [37] and so on is that Islam and history are in close interaction with one another. There has been no such phenomenon as 'pure' or pristine Islam at the societal level except in the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the Pious Caliphate. What later happened is a matter of history in relation to Islam. Against such analysis, the historical evolution of Muslim societies cannot be categorized as 'Wahhabi Islam', 'Arab Islam', 'Indian Islam', 'Indonesian Islam', 'African Islam', 'Kashmiri Islam' and so on. There certainly are varied characteristics in Muslim societies that make them distinct from each other in one way or the other. But such variety rather than diversity is rooted in varied social structures of different tribes and nations. People belonging to diverse social groups or even within one ethnic group in the Muslim world cannot be expected to respond to Islam uniformly or in a routine manner. Any response at the individual and societal levels connected with a man's relationship with God and His holy personages involves the interplay of complex religious, social, economic, historical, cultural and psychological factors constituting the personality of an individual and the structure of a society of which he or she is

a part. Islam's movement in history in relation to society cannot, therefore, be explained within the frameworks of the mental constructs of historians, sociologists, anthropologists and also within the dogmatic limits of any religious theology. Studying the religion or devotional acts at the shrines, therefore, demands a close study of the believers' ritual acts by a student of history rather than a superficially subjecting them to arbitrary critical examination in a manner of the religious reformists. While the latter's tools of critical analysis are essentially related to dogmatic theology and ideology of a socio-religious or politico-religious group, a student of history's main interest lies in promoting a better and an objective understanding of the socio-religious phenomenon without being an adherent of either a particular theology or ideology.

The objective truth about the rituals evolved at the shrine of Hazratbal is their uniqueness. This adds not simply a mystical dimension but also vitality to Islam in the local context. While, according to E.H. Carr, the historian's function is to find out what is general in the unique, [38] here the researcher will seek to understand that primary objective only in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

RITUALS AT HAZRATBAL

The shrine of Hazratbal essentially serves the purpose of a Jama mosque for the faithful. It gives them an opportunity to offer the prescribed congregational prayers, particularly the Friday prayer, in the biggest assembly of the faithful in the Valley. But, more importantly, it enables the faithful to participate in certain acts of rituals that uplift their souls and invigorate their faith in the Prophet's (SAW) eternity in a spiritual sense. The heart of the faith is Hazratbal being the repository of the Prophet's hair and hence the most important shrine in a regional context. The sacred hair is not simply a relic of the past but something sacrosanct and therefore deserving reverence. Scenes of individual reverential acts become a daily affair. But more important is the collective manifestation of the veneration on important occasions in the Islamic calendar. The sacred relic could have been placed in a museum attached to the shrine for the exhibition of daily visitors to Hazratbal. In that case, however, Hazratbal would not have been an

unparalled centre of pilgrimage in Kashmir. The faithful would have come, offered prayers and left the premises of the mosque or even the shrine after having its glimpse without the support of a priest or an elaborate set of rituals. In this regard, several explorations need to be made. Why did such an ambience evolve in Kashmir alone? Why did not other Muslim societies in the subcontinent have such a historical experience? Has the Kashmiri Muslim society deviated from the pristine teachings of Islam or its response to Islam was a matter of creativity in a distinct socio-cultural setting?

Such questions struck the mind in the shrine precincts itself while closely observing the ritual acts at the exhibition of the holy relic by the passionate devotees. In spite of the criticism of the relic veneration as a violation of the *Shariah* by *Ahl-i-Hadith* and *Jamat*-i-*Islami*, the present study attests to the *Shari'ah*-adherence of the devotees of the shrine of Hazratbal creatively rather than mechanistically. Here we need to draw the line between the prostration before Allah during *namaz* and the devotional acts on a mere glimpse of the relic. Even if one person in a hundred may be spotted prostrating at the entrance gate of the shrine, such an act of extreme veneration should not delude us into drawing a conclusion unacceptable to him or her. When I came across such two cases, the misconception that I hitherto held began to dispel once I entered into a dialogue with them. Asking Zuni (name changed) why she committed the sin of prostrating before the shrine and simultaneously touching the dust at the entrance gate with her hands to smear her face and body, she replied: "I am not punctilious about the daily five-time prayers at my home. I offer *namaz* only when I visit a local shrine in my own village or elsewhere. Don't you know that this place is not less than Madina for me? Our Prophet (SAW) is *Hayatu'n Nabi*. He is spiritually seated here. Why shouldn't I show my reverence to the King of the prophets (*Sultanu'l-Anbiya*)? This is not a sin. I regard the Prophet (SAW) as the Grace of the Worlds but not as God. He (SAW) vouchsafes his grace to those who know how to approach his *asthan* in all humility." Ghulam Mohammad (name changed) while responding to the same question observed somewhat philosophically: "If my *ajizi* (humility) before my *agha* (master) is mistaken as sin, I would rather implore you

write a piece of praise on the virtue of being haughty in front of the shrine."

The empirical evidence of the kind under examination seeks an explanation for the ritual behaviour of the devotees. The solution to this complex issue may not be found in any sort of explanation but in faithful description of the faithfulness of the devotees inside the shrine.

The holy relic is exhibited on two major occasions in addition to the anniversaries of the four illustrious Companions of the Prophet (SAW). The spiritual and social scene at the shrine during the time of exhibition of the relic is the same on all occasions be it the presence of two lakh devotees on the eve of the Eid-i-*Milad* and Shab-i-*M'iraj* and 20,000 to 25,000 on other occasions viz., anniversaries of the four Caliphs and the Fridays. The death anniversaries of the three Caliphs namely Abu Bakr Siddiq, 'Umar and 'Usman attract more than 20,000 devotees even on a working day. But that of 'Ali draws about 30 to 35 thousands. This is due to the fact that his anniversary falls on 21st of the holy month of Ramadhan. Usually the faithful visit the *dargah* in large numbers during this month. And if 21st Ramadhan happens to be a Friday the number of the devotees visiting the *dargah* even exceeds 35, 000. Since the rituals observed on the anniversaries of the four Caliphs are almost the same, it would not be proper to make repetitions. Here a description of the rituals observed in the *dargah* on the eve of the death anniversary of 'Ali is given keeping in mind the similar acts of devotion exhibited by the devotees on other anniversaries. However, it is noteworthy that on each occasion the *manqabat khwan* recites only that *manqabat* which suits the occasion. [39]

On the eve of the death anniversary of 'Ali, Hazratbal wears a festive look. Devotees start thronging the *Dargah* in the early hours of morning with the main purpose of having a glimpse of the sacred relic of the Prophet (SAW).

The 21st Ramadhan being a day of fasting, though not a public-holiday, continues to be an important event in the calendar of the devotees of the shrine of Hazratbal. The number of devotees at the shrine is particularly large at the midday prayers (zuhar). A considerable number of women devotees are also present. The proceedings at the shrine start at noon. No sermon is given by the khatib. But it is interesting that the

manner in which the proceedings are conducted by *manqabat khwan* rather than the *khatib* is evidence enough of the orderly manner in which Islam became intelligible to Kashmiris over centuries.

The *Dargah* of Hazratbal attracts both the elite and the commoners belonging to different sections of Kashmiri society. Noteworthily, both the elite and commoners exhibit an active and keen devotion in the orderly course of ritual acts conducted under the supervision of the *manqabat khwan*. Even those who have no knowledge of Persian have memorized over the years the poems eulogizing the spirituality and nobility of the character of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his four Companions. Although main focus of the poems is the Prophet (SAW), the contribution of the four Companions to Islam is highlighted as a useful and necessary adjunct to the eternal need for inculcating the spirit of devotion among the participants in the ritual act. During the recitation of the *n'at* and *manqabat*, centuries old practice of glorifying the deeds of the Prophet (SAW) and his four Companions seems to crystallize itself in the form of a certain kind of social action. Thus one may notice a devotee distributing the dates among the believers. This act has symbolic significance. Once at home, the devotee, who may also be head of the family, is able to revitalize the spiritual ties of his children with the shrine of Hazratbal. At the time of breaking his fast in the evening along with his family, the devotee distributes the same dates brought as *tabbaruk* (a portion from the blessed present) from Hazratbal. A couple of dates need not merely be understood as tabbaruk but essentially a subtle medium for ensuring the spiritual bonds of the family with the shrine.

Besides the recitation of *durud*, *manqabat*, *n'at*, the group recitation of *Kibriyat-i-Ahmar*, compiled by Shaikh Abdu'l-Qadir Jilani, on 21st Ramadhan in the *Dargah* of Hazratbal is not without any spiritual and historical significance.

But the two great occasions at the Hazratbal drawing a huge crowd are the Miladu'n-Nabi and *M'iraj*-i-Alam. These events are of great significance from the spiritual, historical, and economic viewpoint. On each occasion, festivities continue in the shrine for two days, the first being the public holiday and the second one being reserved for the women devotees. The University of Kashmir remains officially closed even on the

second day due to the rush of pilgrims to the *dargah* and the use of the university ground for parking purposes. The Friday following these two events are also declared public holidays. Before describing the rituals that impart a distinctive character to Hazratbal on three festive days, it is important to describe the night-long recitals preceding 12 Rabiu'l-Awwal (the Prophet's (SAW) birthday) and the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (*M'iraj*-ul-'Alam). *Shabkhwani* is an important feature of the nights preceding the respective Friday following.

The Valley is the only region in the Muslim world where believers observe an exceedingly long set of rituals beginning from the night preceding the two important events. Why do over one lac Muslims remain awake for the whole night in Hazratbal? Why do two lac Muslims make their presence felt on the Fridays following such two great events? Why do Muslims present themselves in large numbers at each prescribed five-day prayer? Why is the second day of *Milad* and *M'iraj* especially reserved for the women devotees of the shrine? We will seek answers to such important questions only while describing the ritual acts at the shrine during these festive occasions in their entirety.

Significantly, it is not the three-day celebrations at the shrine of Hazratbal connected with *Milad* and *M'iraj* that attract attention of historians and social anthropologists, but also the 12-day long preparations before these great events in the otherwise dull life of Kashmiri Muslims. It is important to note that the local tradition of celebrating *Milad* and *M'iraj* in accordance with certain age-old traditions continues to persist. An interview with senior citizens belonging to cross- sections of Kashmiri society revealed the number of pilgrims to the shrine has in fact increased over the number of years on these two great occasions regardless of the criticism of the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and the *Jamat*-i-*Islami*.

Actually preparations begin twelve days before the first day of *Milad* and *M'iraj*. It is not that 12 days have been fixed randomly as preparatory days for the celebration of the great event. Actually the numbers are revelatory and informative in both spiritual and historical sense. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was born on 12th Rabiu'l-Awwal and he (SAW) passed away on the same date. A chronology of the Prophet's (SAW)

life is available even to the folk. The Kashmiri *'ulama* and sufis of the early eighteenth century cannot be denied the credit for inculcating an inner piety among the Kashmiri Muslims through such ritual acts as help in remembering the Prophet (SAW) on the eve of his (SAW) birthday and Ascension. From the standpoint of social history, the significance of such collective spiritual and social experience cannot be underestimated in the traditional society. This may be the reason why during centuries of misrule and oppression, the celebrations at the Hazratbal provided a sort of psychological comfort to the Kashmiris. This point has been elucidated in a separate chapter[41].The rush of devotees to the shrine of Hazratbal during the preparatory days has only doubled. Countless Muslim men and women in Srinagar particularly and several others from the villages make it a point to visit the *dargah* continuously for twelve days in connection with the *Milad* and *M'iraj* celebrations.

The visit to Hazratbal amounts to a pilgrimage to a place believed to be hallowed by the spirit of the Prophet (SAW). Hazratbal is a source of bliss for the pilgrims as it is the abode of sacred hair of the Prophet (SAW). The relic has symbolic significance for the devotees and gives meaning to their existence. They are well aware of the fact that the Hazratbal is not more than the Second Madina for them. The pilgrimage of the Hajjis to the tomb of the Prophet in Madina is of supreme significance. 'What is the religious justification of calling Hazratbal the Second Madina?' I asked several *'ulama* connected with or who visit the shrine as devotees. 'The Second Madina is self-explanatory... Actually it was the advent of the holy relic in Kashmir that inspired the muse of a poet to call Kashmir the Second Madina. The reverentially grand reception the people accorded to the relic under the leadership of the illustrious *'ulama* and Sufis of those days must have certainly inspired the poet. His expression that Kashmir became Madina with the arrival of the relic points not only to a fact of history but, also, the supernal greatness of the Prophet (SAW). For the devotees anything that binds them to the Prophet (SAW) in eternity is important; it is in this sense that Hazratbal has played a central role in the religious life of Kashmiri Muslims' was the unanimous answer.

The religious activity at the shrine of Hazrabal during the 12 days prior to the *Milad* and *M'iraj* shows how Islamic piety

and mundane aspirations of the devotees have intermingled in the life of the Kashmiri Muslims. There are a number of devotees who visit the shrine with the main object of performing any of the prescribed prayers in congregation in the sublime environment of the *dargah*. But there are many devotees specially women who combine inner piety with wants. In order to attain the best possible results, one has to make an intention (*niyah*). So everything depends on *niyah*. Some pray at the *dargah* solely for pleasing Allah and the Prophet (SAW). Yet others visit the *dargah* with some worldly movtive. In either case, a visit to the *dargah* constitutes an essential part of the religious life of a devotee. It is important, from the viewpoint of religion, to note that the assemblage of men and women for congregational prayers at five times is considerable (20000-25000) during the 12 days preceding the main two events under reference. From the economic view point, a good business is done at the stalls set up at the shrine. The transport industry, too, is benefited as a huge fleet of buses ply the Hazratbal route.

The most important aspect of the 12-days celebrations at the *dargah* is that it fosters social solidarity among the devotees. People belonging to the same localities who visit the *dargah* together for 12 consecutive days certainly create a feeling of oneness among them. The social cohesiveness is also promoted among the near and distant relatives visiting the *dargah* together.

On both occasions of *Milad* and *M'iraj* the *dargah* of Hazratbal presents a grand spectacle. Besides the significant participation of pilgrims from all sections of the Kashmiri society in the congregational prescribed prayers, the assemblages at the *dargah* after prayers sees the devotees' countenance lighting up at the glimpse of the holy relic. Many photographs taken by the researcher on such occasions capturing the emotions, sensibilities and sensitivities of fervent devotees speak for themselves. Loud cries of the devotees can be heard from a distance. "Ya Rasul ullah", "*myani* (my) Agha (let me sacrifice my life for you)", "*Ya Rahmatan lil 'alamin*", "*mein gham kar dur* (may you cure my ailments)", "I am a broken soul" and so on are the oft repeated expressions. The expressions range from spiritual cravings to mundane aspirations. Most devotees even weep bitterly. The scene of the

communion of the devotee with the relic is a distinctive feature of the religious life at the *dargah*.

In conclusion, most devotees visit the *dargah* for a *ziyarat* of the relic in addition to the religious duty of offering *namaz* in congregation. Yet at a particular juncture of their extreme devotion, the devotees personify the holy relic. This is a question that will continue to be debated by the *'ulama* with differing views.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The first attempt at preaching the Wahhabi ideas in Kashmir was made by Husain Batku, a resident of Srinagar. He raised a cry against *pir-muridi*, superstitions, rituals and denounced worship of the shrines. However, Maharaja Ranbir Singh expuled Batku from Srinagar due to a strong opposition of the Wahhabi doctrines by the *mullahs*. Batku's mission was continued by Sabzar Shah and Sidique Hasan Khan. Later, in the 1920s the Wahhabis founded the *Anjuman-i-Ahl-i-Hadith* that came into prominence under the leadership of Maulvi Ghulam Nabi Mubariki and Maulvi Nuruddin.
   The *Ahl-i-Hadith* confined themselves to the text of the Quran and the Hadith and relied upon individual judgement for reinterpretation. They disowned the concept of *Hayat-un-Nabi* or the Prophet (SAW) being still alive and in touch with his (SAW) followers. They believed there could be no communion whatsoever between the living and the dead and consequently no benefit from either side. They advocated reform in Muslim manners, customs and life and aimed at the elimination of superstitions and rituals. They emphasized the unity of Godhead, denounced the worship of *pirs* and recommended the abolition of anti-Islamic practices among the Muslims.
   Mohammad Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar 1846-1947: a study in socio-cultural change*, Gulshan Books, Residency Road, Srinagar, 2007 (third edition), p. 112.

2. Prof. B. A. Khan has done a pioneering work on the Ahl-i-Hadith movement in northern India. However, his unpublished M. Phil thesis entitled *Ahl-i-Hadith movement in Kashmir* contains a lot of information about the role of this organization in weaning the devotees of shrines from 'relic worship'.

3. While Prof. Qiyamuddin Ahmad (*Wahhabi movement in India*) includes the Ahl-i-Hadith among the Wahhabis, Prof. Bashir Ahmad Khan refutes his viewpoint.

4. Ghulam Rasul Bhat, *Mui-i-muqqadas-i-Nabwi (SAW) Hazratbal: tawarikh ke aainay main*, (n. d.), Srinagar.

5. Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Bukhari, *Sahi al-Bukhari*, an abstract of 1044 *ahadith* in original Arabic with Urdu translation given in *Muqaddima tajrid al-Bukhari*, Malik Muhammad Din and Sons, Lahore, 1936, hadith no.131, p.65.

6. *Sahee Muslim* (quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 2, 3).

7. Allama Shibli Nomani, *Sirat-un-Nabvi (SAW)*, Vol II, p. 166.

8. Ibid., p. 192.

9. Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis, *Madariju'n-Nubuwwa*, Lucknow, 1867. I have consulted the Urdu translation of the work. G. R. Bhat wrongly calls this book *Marij-un-Nubuwwa*. Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis, an authority on hadith, was a contemporary of Emperors Akbar and Jahangir. This book describes the miracles of the Prophet (SAW).

10. G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 5, 6.

11. Khwaja Azam Diddamari, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir*.

12. Shaikh Muhammad Chishti alias Radhu gained eminence for his asceticism and adherence to the *Shari'ah*. He indulged in *zikr* loudly and advised his disciples to do the same. He had a flair for both poetry and prose. Diddamari regards him as one of the prominent Sufis of his time. He breathed his last on 15 Shawwal 1126 A. H. / 14 October 1714 A. D.

13. Quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 11, 12.

14. Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

15. Ibid., pp. 47, 48.

16. Ibid., p. 50.

17. Diddamari, op. cit.

18. Ibid.

19. Quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 58-65.

20. Ibid., pp. 66, 67.

21. Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

22. Mulla Bahauddin Mattu, *Tazkira-i-Naqshbandiya* (quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 70-71).

23. Abdul Wahhab Nuri, *Fathat-i-Kubrawiya* (quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 81-85).

24. G. R. Bhat, op. cit., p. 79.

25. Ibid, pp. 83, 84.

26. Pir Hasan Shah, *Tarikh-i-auliya-i-Kashmir*.

27. Muhammad Khalil Mirjanpuri, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* (quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 99-104).

28. Sadullah Shahabadi, *Bagh-i-Suleiman* (quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., pp. 104-106).

29. Shaikh Ahmad Waiz, *Al-Khamsul-latif-fi-tarif asar-i-sharif* (quoted in G. R. Bhat, op. cit., p. 177-183).

30. Ishaq Khan, *The significance of the Dargah of Hazratbal in socio-religious and political life of Kashmiri Muslims*, Christian W. Troll (ed.), Muslim shrines in India, pp. 172-188.
(This article has been reproduced recently in T. N. Madan (ed.), *India's religions: perspectives from Sociology and History*, Oxford, 2004, pp. 371-82.).

31. Ishaq Khan, op. cit., p.177.
32. Ibid, p. 177.

33. Ibid, p. 175.

34. Ibid, pp. 176, 177.

35. the Quran

36. An infidel, a polytheist.

37. Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792), founder of the Wahhabi movement, spoke against certain beliefs and practices such as the veneration of Sufis and their tombs. He labeled them unwarranted innovations (*bida*) as they compromised with unity of Allah. He laid stress on living a life based strictly on the Quran and the Sunnah.

38. E. H. Carr, *What is history?* , Penguin Books, 1968, p. 63.

39. The death anniversary of the fourth *Khalifa* of Islam, Hazrat Ali, the son in law of the Prophet (S.A.W.), is celebrated with

traditional solemnity in the shrines and mosques of Kashmir every year. The Shiis celebrate the occasion in the *imam*bara where the sermons delivered by the preachers move the devotees of Hazrat Ali to tears. They also resort to *marsia* (epicedium) on this event. In the major shrines and mosques of the Sunnis, however, the *khatibs* highlight the virtues of Hazrat Ali for the edification of the pious. But the most important place for the dissemination of the spiritual and moral teachings of Hazrat Ali is the *Dargah* of Hazratbal.

40. *Kibriyat-i-Ahmar*

41. See next chapter.

VIII
RELIGIOUS DEVOTION AS REFLECTED IN POETRY

"Poetry is most just to its divine origin, when it administers the comforts and breathes the thought of religion." These words of the illustrious English poet William Wordsworth are enough to explain why poetry has been a powerful vehicle for the expression of human sentiment in the shrines and the mosques of Kashmir. Though the Qur'an is critical of the poets and their wild imaginations,[1] the denunciation has a social context of the Arabia of the sixth century A.D. where the pagan poetry did not serve either any social purpose or promote the cause of the primordial religion (*din-i-hanif*). It must be pointed out that as early as the days of the Prophet (SAW) the act of versifying his nobility of character and culture was looked with favour.[2] But for this inspiring development, Arabic and later Persian poetry would not have flourished through the centuries of transition of numerous societies to Islam. Several societies that came under the influence of Islam due to the inspiring Arabic and Persian poets, however, produced innumerable poets in regional languages. It was through this medium Islam became comprehensible even to those who did not know Arabic and Persian. Kashmir also experienced this development as a result of Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi's creative response to the arrival of Sufis from Central Asia and Persia in the Valley. Shaikh Nuruddin's mystical poetry made such an impact on the Kashmiri mind that it came to be regarded as the Qur'an in Kashmiri (*Koshur* Qur'an).

One of the most important features of the religious life at the shrines in the Kashmir Valley is, therefore, the intonation of *n'at*, *manqabat* and *munajat* in a resounding voice by the devotees. This is in addition to the loud recitation of *durud* and

awrad. While *durud* and *awrad* are in Arabic, *n'at* and *manqabat* are in both Persian and Kashmiri. Every shrine has its own *n'at / manqabat khwan* who conducts the proceedings of the religious assemblages at the shrine in an orderly manner. The devotees recite *n'at* and *manqabat* separately with religious ardour, sometimes *n'at* is intoned in chorus to the accompaniment of *durud*. The particular occasions for the recitation of *durud*, *n'at* , *munajat* and *manqabat* are the large gatherings of devotees in the shrine on Fridays, *'urs'*, two *Eids*, *Eid-i-Miladu'n Nabi*, *M'iraju'l-Alam*, anniversaries of the "Rightly-Guided" four great Companions of the Prophet (SAW), the first ten days of Muharram etc.

The loud reading of *durud*, *n'at*, *manqabat* and *munajat* particularly marks the celebrations at the shrines in Kashmir. Significantly, Islam in Kashmir has maintained its distinctive characteristic in this regard till this day despite criticism from some quarters viz the seminal religious organizations like the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and the Jamat-i-Islami. For the latter organisations, the intonation of even *durud*, *manqabat* and *munajat* is an innovation, *bid'a*. They do not underestimate the importance of *zikr*. However, what they consider redundant is the organisation of such assemblies of *zikr* at home or in the mosques as do not find sanction in the *Sunnah*. For them the reading of the Quran and *durud* is enough during *namaz* or even after it at an individual level.

Evidently, therefore, the major shrines of Kashmir and several other shrines have continued to hold a distinct Islamic identity in the regional context as against the mosques affiliated to the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and the Jamat-i-Islami. This is also a fact about the several mosques in the entire Valley of Kashmir not connected with the latter organizations. There is no fundamental difference between the mosques maintained by the Waqf Board or various trusts related to the shrines and those controlled by the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and Jamat-i-Islami in respect of the observance of prayers five times a day. But what distinguishes the shrines and the mosques under the former's influence from the mosques of the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and Jamat-i-Islami are their ritualistic functions rather than the observance of the fundamental religious duty of *namaz*. These ritualistic acts in the form of resounding recitation of *durud*, *n'at*, *manqabat*, *munajat* and *awrad* have their origins in the local

ethos. This local ethos is not based on the devotees' mere penchant for chanting aloud *durud, manqabat, munajat* and *awrad*, but in reality, draws sustenance from a literary tradition in both Persian and Kashmiri. There is hardly any hagiographical work that does not contain verses eulogizing the Prophet (SAW), his Companions and the Sufis. These compositions have been recited with devotional spirit in the circles of various Sufi orders since the formative stage of Islam in Kashmir. Hence this tradition has survived as part and parcel of the Sufi tradition itself. A vast bulk of poetic works in Persian and Kashmiri belonging to the genre of *n'at, manqabat* and *munajat*, therefore, merits a careful examination as against the depreciation of the same by the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and Jamat-i-Islami.

The two main sources of Islam are the Qur'an and *Hadith*. Hence, anything not in conformity with the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* is an innovation (*bid'a*). So what is reprehensible to the religious reformists is not the *n'at* but the way it is recited before and after the prescribed prayers. They also object to the intonation of *durud* at such congregations in the mosques and the shrines on the basis of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah.* The arguments put forth by the advocates of such a practice are also based on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. But my aim is not to enquire into this vexed question of theological nature, so I will seek to discover only the historical reasons for such a phenomenon.

Scores of *'ulama* and knowledgeable devotees were interviewed by the researcher with regard to the controversy over the echoing recital of hymns in the shrines and mosques. They quoted verses from the Qur'an [3] and *Hadith* in favour of the loud recitals. In addition, they were concerned about the preservation of a tradition that served the cause of Islam in the Valley through centuries of evolution. This tradition, they believe, is important for strengthening the spiritual bonds of the devotees with the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his venerable Companions, *ahl-i-bait* and the Sufis not only on the grounds of the Qur'an and *Hadith* but also firm emotional and social foundations. The chief concern of such devotees is not to define religion but to discover it in the emotional and social ambience of the shrine precincts. Thus for the devotees of the shrines, Islam is not merely a matter of definition or theology but, in

essence, a social reality. This fact can be guaged from the firm and unchanging attachment of the devotees to Islam through the shrines. The recitation of *kalima* and the observance of prayer five times a day are, indeed, fundamental obligations. Any Muslim can fulfil these obligations individually at home or everyday life or by going to a mosque daily. However, what distinguishes him from a Muslim who practices the theory is his cultivated sense of commitment to Islam in a social and historical sense. Therefore the virtues of the great spiritual and historical heroes of Islam are honoured collectively so as to pass on those traits of spiritual and social behviour from one generation to another. The shrines, in a way, continue to serve both the spiritual and the social purpose.

A careful study of *n'at* and *manqabat* helps us in understanding the psychology and the environment the Kashmirs have lived in through centuries of orderly evolution. They show an important aspect of the culture of the devotees at the shrines: intensely religious and emotional and at the same time safeguarding spiritual and ethical values and possessing a worldview with wider horizons. The aim is to portray the essence of some popular *n'at* and *manqabat* recited in the shrines and the mosques of the Valley.

Despite the fact that Persian has lost its past glory in Kashmir, *n'at*s composed by Khwaja Muinu'ddin Chisti [4], Ahmad Jam [5], Hakim Sana'i [6], Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani [7], Shams Tabrizi [8], Shaikh Fariduddin Attar [8], Shaikh S'adi Shirazi [9], Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani [9], Amir Khusrau [10], Maulana 'Abdu'r-Rahman Jami [11], Abul Faiz Faizi [12], Baba Daud Khaki, Shaikh Yaqûb Sarfi [13], Khwaja Habibullah Naushari [14], Mirza Akmaluddin [15], and several others continue to be recited aloud at special religious assemblages at the major shrines under study. A majority of the devotees do not know Persian, but surprisingly the tradition of reciting Persian *n'at* on special occasions has been preserved till this date by the *n'at khwan*s. The idea is to inculcate the spiritual and ethical values among the Kashmiri Muslims. The *n'atiya* poetry has a more compelling emotional and spiritual appeal than a sermon. This may be the reason why Kashmiris continue to take poetry seriously. It does not matter whether a devotee knows Persian or not but what matters is whether he has memorized a Persian poem. Persian may be Greek to an ordinary devotee; yet the meaning of the

verses remembered by him is superimposed on his consciousness, due to the eloquence of the *khatib* of the mosque/shrine. In fact, the *n'atiya* and *manqabat* literature has been one of the sources of Islam for the preachers in the mosques and the shrines of Kashmir, in addition to the *tazkira* literature concerning the Sufis and the Rishis. The traditional *khatibs* in the mosques of the Valley have never been rabble rousers in political terms, but significantly, religious leaders of a kind that have roused the passions of the devotees with the aim of strengthening their emotional bonds with the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the Companions, *ahl-i bait* and the Sufis. Some of the *n'ats* still sung with religious fervour in the mosques and the shrines of the Valley need to be thoughtfully examined as they shaped the way of thinking and attitudes of the devotees towards Islam and the world.

The most popular *n'atiya* poet in Persian language among the Kashmiris has been Maulana 'Abdu'r-Rahman Jami. Some of his compositions that create a fervid religious environment in the *dargah* of Hazratbal and other shrines are given below: [16]

منم خاکے ز آستانِ محمدؐ
غلامے از غلامانِ محمدؐ

محمدؐ ہست مہمانِ خداوند
دو عالم ہست مہمانِ محمدؐ

گناہگارم سیاہ کارم ولیکن
بدستم ہست دامانِ محمدؐ

تمامے انبیاء و اولیاہم
نمک خوارند از خوانِ محمدؐ

نہ تنہا ہست جامیؔ نعت خوانش
خدائے ما ثناء خوانِ محمدؐ

This composition of the classical age influenced the attitudes of the Kashmiris in a creative direction towards Islam. Jami's verses are in veneration of the Prophet (SAW) and have a certain kind of poignant heartfelt appeal. Jami's description of himself as the dust of the *asthan* of Muhammad (SAW) besides

showing his humble side also point to the highly structured source of his muse. While Jami's focus is on the tomb of the Prophet (SAW) in Madina, for an average singer of his composition in the sublime environment of the *dargah* of Hazratbal, the object of veneration is the holy relic. This is reflected in another *n'at* of Jami sung in the *dargah* of Hazratbal on the eve of Shab-i-*M'iraj* and Shab-i-*Milad*: [17]

ز رحمت کن نظر بر حالِ زارم یا رسول اللہؐ
غریبم بے نوایم، خاکسارم یا رسول اللہؐ
ز داغِ ہجر تو دِل داغدارم یا رسول اللہؐ
بہارِ صد چمن کردہ نظارم یا رسول اللہؐ
توئی تسکینِ دِل آرامِ جان صبر و قرارِ من
رُخِ پُرنور بنما بے قرارم یا رسول اللہؐ
توئی مولائی من آقائی من والیٔ جانِ من
توئی دانی کہ جُز تو کس ندارم یا رسول اللہؐ
توئی سلطانِ عالم جُملہ عالم زیرِ دامانت
توئی مولائی من، من خاکسارم یا رسول اللہؐ
دمِ آخر نُمائی جلوۂ دیدار جامی را
ز لُطفِ تو ہمی اُمیدوارم یا رسول اللہؐ

In this *n'at* the poet makes a direct appeal to the Prophet (SAW) hoping he may be vouchsafed with his grace. He regards the Prophet (SAW) as his spiritual master (*maula*) and the king of the entire universe. He describes his inner condition in a state of extreme humbleness of mind and heart. As the poet cannot bear the pangs of separation from the Prophet (SAW), he therefore longs for his beloved master's vision. While the religious preachers/*n'at khwans* in various shrines and mosques of the Valley recite Jami's composition with great zeal, the *dargah* of Hazratbal, in fact, provides a distinctive kind of environment for persuasive expression of spiritual longings of the devotees. Several devotees interviewed by the researcher actually get a feel of Madina in Hazratbal while singing this *n'at*

on two accounts. First, for them the Prophet (SAW), in the context of the Qur'an, is 'Grace of the Worlds' (*Rahmatun lil-'Alamin*) [18]; hence his (SAW) eternal grace pervades every sacred place, including (particularly) the Hazratbal. Second, Hazratbal is so named because it is the receptacle for the sacred hair of the Prophet (SAW). Thus, a glimpse of the Prophet's hair is considered to be the *ziyarat* of the Prophet (SAW), no matter if he is entombed in Madina. The very fact that Hazratbal has been named Madina-i-Thani [19] thus imparts a certain confidence and faith to a devotee to share the spiritual experience of Jami, no matter in a regional setting.

In several other *n'at*s of Jami the Prophet (SAW) is praised as *naznin* [20], *qamar* [21], *shams* [22], *a'ina* [23], *mihrab* [24], *qaus-i-qaza* [25], Eid moon, Ka'ba, *waduha* [26], *yasin* [27], *kuntu kanzan* [28] . Through the use of these epithets the mystical dimension of Islam in relation to the Prophet's (SAW) supernal personality has been made intelligible to the commoners in the *dargah*s. In a popular *munajat* of Jami, the devotees invoke the Prophet's (SAW) intercession on the Day of Judgement. [29]

تنم فرسوده جاں پاره ز عصیاں یا رسول اللہؐ
دلم پُر درد و آواره ز ہجراں یا رسول اللہؐ
شب و روز از شکیبائی ز حق گشتم تمنائی
بخلوت سوئے من آئی خراماں یا رسول اللہؐ
چو سوئے من گذر آری منِ مسکیں ز ناداری
نثارِ نقشِ نعلینت کنم جاں یا رسول اللہؐ
ز پا اُفتادم از پیری برحمت دستِ من گیری
ہمیں یک حرف بپذیری ز ناداں یا رسول اللہؐ
بصدیقؓ خریدارم عمرؓ را دوست مے دارم
فدا سازم دل و جاں را بعثمانؓ یا رسول اللہؐ
نہادم پیش گاہے سر بپائے ساقی کوثرؓ
اماماں را بخدم چاکر بایقاں یا رسول اللہؐ
ز کردۂ خویش حیرانم سیہ شد روزِ عصیانم
پشیمانم پشیمانم پشیماں یا رسول اللہؐ
بوقتِ مرگ در مانم ز تنِ بیروں بود جانم
نگہداری تو ایمانم ز شیطان یا رسول اللہؐ
چو روزِ حشر برخیزم بدامانِ تو آویزم!
ز دیده خونِ دل ریزم فراواں یا رسول اللہؐ
ز جامِ حُب تو مستم بزنجیرِ تو دل بستم
نمیگویم که من ہستم سخنداں یا رسول اللہؐ
چو بازوئے شفاعت را کشائی بر گنہگاراں
مکن محروم جامیؔ را دراں آں یا رسول اللہؐ

The mystical dimension of the Prophet's (SAW) personality finds a strong echo in the following poem of Jami. Here the focus is on Nur-i-Muhammadi (SAW) as against the Prophet's (SAW) heavenly journey (ascension, *mi'raj*) and the chapter (*surah*) *Alam Nashrah* of the Quran. The stress in the poem is on the invocation of Muhammad's (SAW) name by the prophets like Adam, Noha, Ayub, Yusuf (Joseph), 'Isa (Christ),

Musa (Moses) at the time of their distress. Indeed, through the repeated recitation of such poems the aim of the *n'atkhwan* or *khatib* at the shrines/mosques is to infuse a spirit of adoration for the Prophet (SAW). [30]

و صلی الله علی نور کزو شد نور ها پیدا
زمین از حب او ساکن فلک از عشق او شیدا
محمد احمد و محمود که وے را خالقش بستود
از و شد بود هر موجود و زو شد دیده ها پیدا
اگر نام محمد را نیاوردے شفیع آدم
نه آدم یافتے توبه نه نوح از غرق نجینا
نه ایوب از بلا راحت نه یوسف حرمت و حشمت
نه عیسیٰ آں مسیحا دم نه موسیٰ آں ید بیضا
دو چشم نرگسینش راکه مازاغ البصر خوانند
دو زلف عنبرینش راکه واللیل اذا یغشیٰ
ز سر سینه اش جامی الم نشرح لک بر خواں
ز معراجش چه میخوانی که سبحان الذی اسریٰ

The following *n'at* of Jami praises the Prophet's (SAW). His (SAW) *jamal* radiates the world and his *wisal* gives a fresh exuberance to *iram*. The poet takes pride in calling himself a slave of the slaves of the progeny of Muhammad (SAW) (al-i Muhammad). The assemblies, mosques and *khanqahs* that reverberate with the remembrance of Muhammad (SAW) can attain spiritual harmony. [31]

جہاں روشن است از جمالِ محمدؐ　　ارم تازہ گشت از وصالِ محمدؐ
بوصفِ رُخش والضحیٰ گشت نازل　　چو واللیل بر زلف و خالِ محمدؐ
محمدؐ بود بادشاہِ حقیقی　　ہمہ پادشاہاں بلالؓ محمدؐ
خوش آں مجلس و مسجد و خانقاہے　　چو دروے بود قیل و قالِ محمدؐ
بود درجہاں ہر کسے را خیالے　　مرا از ہمہ خوش خیالِ محمدؐ
بروئے زمین گشتہ سردار عالم　　ہراں کوشدہ پایمالِ محمدؐ
بصدق و صفائے تواں گشت جامی　　غلامِ غلامانِ آلِ محمدؐ

Although Amir Khusrau is famous for several *n'atiya* compositions, the *n'at* that is often recited aloud in the religious assemblies is the one where the poet marvelously versifies the supernal traits of the Prophet's (SAW) personality in these words: [32]

خط سبز و لب لعل و رُخ زیبا داری　　حُسنِ یوسف دمِ عیسیٰ یدِ بیضا داری
شیوۂ شکل و شمایل حرکات و سکنات　　آنچہ خوباں ہمہ دارند تو تنہا داری
سنبل و یاسمن و نسترن و سرو سہی　　از سرِ زلف و عذار و قدِ بالا داری
تا تبسم نہ کنی عقل نہ گوید ہرگز　　کاندریں آب خضر لولوی لالہ داری
عقل و دین و دل و جاں بردی و ہم صبر و قرار　　دیگر از خسرو بے دل چہ تمنا داری

The veneration of Muhammad (SAW) forms a standard motif of Persian poetry. It was taken up by the Kashmiri poets under the Persian influence. Behind the development was the impact of Jami, Amir Khusrau, Fariduddin 'Attar etc. on the Kashmiri mind. That is why Kashmir produced *n'atiya* poetry in Persian composed by such venerable Sufis like Shaikh Yaqub Sarfi, Khwaj Habibu'llah Naushahri. It was not, however, the Persian *n'atiya* poetry composed in the Valley but the one composed in Kashmiri language which became very popular in the shrines and mosques of Kashmir. It was Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi who composed the first *n'at* in Kashmiri. He extols the Prophet (SAW) and his four Companions in rhyming couplets.

He urges the Muslims to follow the Prophet (SAW) in all respects for the redressal of their spiritual and worldly problems. The Shaikh earnestly looks forward to the intercession of the Prophet (SAW) on the Day of Judgement for his *umma*. Since the Shaikh's brief compositions have didactic value, that is why they continue to appeal to the sensibilities of the *imams* and *khatibs*, besides the *n'atkhwans* in the shrines under study. [33]

پٲرِۍ پٲرِۍ محمدؐ صأبُس شانس
یُس اُمتس بیٚیہ پانس ستۍ
آتھ کھور تھٲوِ گنڈِ ہُند شیطانس
ییٚتۍ لے گٕر قرآنس ستۍ

بندو بٔندٕ بن ہتز کامہ ترٲوِ تو
ترٲوِ تو پرٲوِ تو حقہ ہتز وتھ
حضرت محمدؐ مُتیہ مُشرٲوِ تو
آسہ بن نارس تمس روزِ سکھ

محمدؐ ژور یار برحق گُنزرکھ
تمس نشہ اندی ڈُڈِیٚہک نیاے
جان پان پٔنن تمس پتھ بُزرکھ
سوے چھے تور کو بُڈ رہکاے

اول الف کو گُچھے چھ اللہ
اولیہ پتھ آخر زوال نہ تس
ب کو محمدؐ رسول اللہ
قیامتہ شفاعت کرِ اُمتس

ت کو توکل دون منز کرنے
روزِ نہ گُچھے تمیہ تور قان
دروُد محمدؐ صأبس پرنے
گُڈس تھٲوِ اوُم ایمان

Khwaja Habibu'llah Naushari's popular *n'at* in Kashmiri like *kuntu kanzan awiyay, jalwa maran drawiyay* [34] and Shah Ghafur's *wa huwa m'ulama hu* [35] are the earliest Kashmiri *n'ats* that highlight the exalted stature of the Prophet (SAW) in Sufic terms. Khwaja Habibu'llah's *n'ats* forms a part of ritual singing particularly in the *dargah* of Hazratbal. But the poet whose compositions have formed an important part of the ceremonial intonations at the shrines is Mahmud Gami [36]. His several *n'ats* are not simply invocations, but thoughtful compositions that give strength to the belief of an average devotee in the spiritual and social usefulness of the shrines. In his poem "Banish my all worries, O Eternal Prophet (SAW)" [37], Mahmud Gami not only invokes the intercession of the Prophet on the Day of Judgement, but his help in alleviation of the human sufferings. He repents wasting the days of his youth in not following the injunctions of the Quran and the *Sunnah*. But the poet is hopeful that his sins will be pardoned because of his implorations before the Prophet (SAW). His earnest petitions as a lover (*'ashiq*) of the Prophet (SAW) for protecting the Kashmiris against the recurrence of famines and plague speak of the miserable condition of his compatriots in the times of natural calamities. The woes of the Kashmiris are reflected in this poem, and as such, his humble submissions kindle hope among the devotees even in their misery and despondency. Hope is roused not for material comforts, but for spiritual bliss. Behind such a thought is not only an ardent love for the Prophet (SAW) but a deep longing to have his beloved's vision (*darshan*). There is hardly an auspicious occasion like the Shab-i-*M'iraj* and Shab-i-*Milad* when this *n'at* is not sung in a group by the devotees at the shrine of Hazratbal.

ژٕ کر غم دفع یا حیات النبیؐ   سےٚ کرتم شفا یا حیات النبیؐ
چھ والیل تعریفِ گیسوے تو   رُخت والضحیٰ یا حیات النبیؐ
مبارک سبٹھاہ چانٛۍ ذاتِ شریف   بجود و سخا یا حیات النبیؐ
خلائق، ملائیک، زمین آسمان   ژٕنے پٮ۪تھ گٔے فدا یا حیات النبیؐ
خرابی گٔرِم راوٕرِم اوکچار   اوٚنم سُے سزا یا حیات النبیؐ
فرائض سنت مستحب واجبات   گٔرِم تِم قضا یا حیات النبیؐ
دمو داد فریاد بیمو ژٕنے پٮ۪ٹھ   بروٚنٛہ جزا یا حیات النبیؐ
کرکھ ہے شفاعت چھٕ کیا چار سون   گوٚدھو مُبتلا یا حیات النبیؐ
نگاہ دار مارا زِ راہِ خدا   زِ قحط و وبا یا حیات النبیؐ
دوٚپٕے حق تعالیٰ مشکّم کیا گوٚژھی   شفیع الوریٰ یا حیات النبیؐ
سےٚ چھم ستھ دٕلس منگے ژٕنے تی   آسی بٕکیت شفا یا حیات النبیؐ
بصدقِ ابوبکرؓ و عدلِ عمرؓ   بصاحب حیا یا حیات النبیؐ
بہ شاہ ولایتؓ بہ حسنؓ و حسینؓ   دفع کر بلا یا حیات النبیؐ
بہ اصحاب و ازواجِ آلِ کرام   عفو کر خطا یا حیات النبیؐ
بہ آسے ژٕنے کٔرن بخششم سےٚ گناہ   شقی یا مطی یا حیالت النبیؐ
خجل کوٚس واراہ ندامت تِہٕم   مےٚ ترٛاوُم جُدا یا حیات النبیؐ
سُہ بوزہم آرزو وٕچھم سبٹھاہ   ژٕنے بٔش واتہٕ ہا یا حیات النبیؐ
چھہ محتاج مشتاق دیدارِ خاص   غنی و گدا یا حیات النبیؐ
بدیدارِ انور منور گرٕزٕکھ   براہِ خدا یا حیات النبیؐ
سےٚ عرضاہ ژٕ بوزٕم بہ سمعِ قبول   سےٚ چھم تی مدعا یا حیات النبیؐ
سےٚ چھم لولہٕ کاسن یٕچھے ژٕنے پٮ۪ٹھ   دِتم درشناہ یا حیات النبیؐ

چھ محمود گامی فقیر الحقیر
سبٹھاہ بے نوا یا حیات النبیؐ

The love for the Prophet (SAW) expressed in the poems of Mahmud Gami is itself an evidence of the part played by him in strengthening the bonds of the Kashmiris with the *dargah* of Hazratbal. In this poem the poet encourages the devotees to proceed to Hazratbal in a state of mystic ecstasy and glimpse the holy relic. The reverberating intonation of this *n'at* [38] by

both men and women during the nights of *M'iraj* and *Milad* at the shrine of Hazratbal certainly gives a feel of the distinctive character of Islamic culture in the regional setting of Kashmir. The concluding verses of the *n'at* urge the devotees to prostrate at the gate of the dargah of Hazratbal. The hope of having a *ziyarat* of the holy relic shows how the Kashmiri *n'atiya* poetry played an important role in strengthening their spiritual and social bonds with the shrine:

پۆر ساٗنۍ نبینؐ بسم اللہ   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
اٗم حاشیہ ہیٚنز آسۍ حضرتؐ   گنیہ ہٚن شاند دِتھ با زٗ صتھ
ماژس سوزٕنس مُرسلاہ   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
دُعا ہیٚلہ منگس گُرۍ زِ آمین   آتھ بُتھ چھلتو ڈل چھ تابعین
ژکھ دیے ترأوِتھ سُجدٕ کر با   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
ستن اقلیمن منز چھ بستی   شن نے کیٚنہہ گے اُکس امتی
آسمان بے ستون تھٔم گنیہ چھا   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
ہیٚلہ ہو اٗژکے پٔژ ژور یار   حولیہ کورباگھ پٔھن کارِ بار
جنتس سٔنز سردار تِم چھا   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
پیغمبر ژلاکھ منز کیٚتھ   پأژ کو ژون تتھ آفتابے
آفتاب عالمس چھ یُوان گاہ   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
مُنہ بے پنہ نٔس کر بانکل   اولیہ سان لار تو حضرت بل
سر تراو ڈیڈِ تل بُڈ چھے درگاہ   دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ
نزدیکھ اٗنتھ ہیوت تھٔم دُور   بولیہ وُن تھوو تھٔم وِلِک کستوٗر
محمود گامیس پی خدا چھا
دیدار ہاو یا رسول اللہؐ

Waliu'llah Mattu's yearning to catch a glimpse of the Prophet (SAW) (*Ya Rasul'allah asi gas*-i *choun deedar*) [39], Abdu'l-Ahad Nazim's fervent appeal to 'the lord of Arabia' (*Arabiki sardarai pemhoi padan, ya Nabi gosh faryadan thao*) [40], Rasul Mir Shah Abadi's panegyric on Muhammad as the Light of lights (*Soun Muhammad Nur*-i *Nuranai*) [41], Rahman Dar's [42] salutations to 'the King of the heavens' at the gate of Hazratbal,

Saifu'd-Din Tarabali's use of rich vocabulary in the exaltation of the Prophet (SAW) like the beloved of the Creator, the arbitrator of the east and the west, the sparking jewel, the early spring, the sweet and wholesome water etc., [43] 'Abdu'l-Wahhab Hajini's request to the Prophet (SAW) to grant grace to both the humankind and the world, [44] Sanau'llah Kreri's pathetic poem appealing the puff of air to let the Prophet (SAW) [45] know the pathetic condition of the Kashmiris (under the Dogra rule), and several other poems sung at Hazratbal do not merely form a part of religious life of the devotees at the shrines, but, over the years have played an important role in building up Kashmiri Muslims' traditional self-image. Moreover, it is often asserted at the pulpit of the shrines, that these poetic compositions have provided the devotees an understanding of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, Sufism and, also, a feeling of solidarity with the pilgrims of love thronging the shrines in great numbers.

The devotional poetry forms a sort of an adjunct to the sermons delivered by the *imams* and *khatibs* at the shrines. The Kashmiri *n'ats* are filled with the events connected with the life of the Prophet (SAW). Here it is worthwhile to make some observations on some of the poems that glowingly describe the Prophet's (SAW) Ascension (Mi'raj). Such poems are part and parcel of the Kashmiri Muslim traditional religious life at the shrines on auspicious occasions. This characteristic against the distinct backdrop of Islam in Kashmir must not be construed as syncretistic. In fact, it is, in more than one important respect, what may be called both Islamic and historical.

The singing together of *n'ats* by men and women interests the historians of relgion for the creative role they have and continue to play in the religious life of Kashmiri Muslims. The singing of *n'at* is a striking interlude between the prescribed prayers or during the nights preceding the birthday of the Prophet and his heavenly ascension (mi'raj). The singing of a devotional song, in the context of worship in temples, constitutes ritualized worship. Do we, therefore, trace this distinctiveness about Islam in Kashmir to a phenomenon generally characteristic of the Hindu-Buddhist religious landscape of the subcontinent? Our answer may be in the affirmative since the emphasis of Sufism in Kashmir on the devotional aspect of Islam. As a religion of love, Islam in the

Valley appealed to the Kashmiris in several ways. This distinguishing phenomenon is the result of gradual absorption of the Hindus and Buddhists in Islam over centuries of peaceful transition. Participation in the loud singing of *n'ats*, especially in large congregations at the shrines, certainly had a strong emotional impact on individuals, even those who were unable to fully understand the meanings and significance of the words they sang.

The main theme adopted by the Kashmiri poets includes a passionate appeal to the devotees to rush to the *dargah* of Hazratbal so as to have a glimpse of the holy relic. Abdu'l-Qadir Darwish Qadiri hightlights the importance of Hazratbal in strengthening the belief of Kashmiri Muslims in the supernal grace of the holy relic. He does not hesitate to designate the abode that houses the relic as Madina, Qibla and Ka'ba. [46].

وۄتھ ہمٕو شاہراہ موئے نبیؐ
کیٛہہ وُچھو جلوہ گاہ موئے نبیؐ
جلوٕ ہاوان چھہ شاہدِ مقصودا!
در حضورِ نگاہ موئے نبیؐ
برتر از شان و شوکتِ ثقلین
پیشِ حق عزّ و جاہ موئے نبیؐ
اعتقادُک مدینہ در کشمیر
حضرتہ بارگاہ موئے نبیؐ
ژاس اُمیدوار در درگاہ
آسس امداد خواہ موئے نبیؐ
قبلۂ دین کعبۂ ایمان
حرمِ خانقاہ موئے نبیؐ
نورِ صدق و صفا چھہ صاف دِین
بہ حقیقت گواہ موئے نبیؐ
وُچھتہٕ روشن شگوفۂ والیل
در بہارِ سیاہ موئے نبیؐ
چھُم ضعیفن روان تسلیٰ دِل
قوتہ دستگاہ موئے نبیؐ
خط آزادلی سیاہ کارن
دادہ ایزد بجاہ موئے نبیؐ
قادری سلسلہٕ نجاتُک زان
در دو عالم پناہ موئے نبیؐ

In another popular *n'at*, [47] the *dargah* of Hazratbal is a safe haven for the poet in the hope of being pardoned for his sins. In concise verses, he acknowledges his guilt before the Prophet (SAW) in the majestic shrine (*dargah 'aali*) and seeks his forgiveness in the context of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin*, *Shaf'i* - *Muznibin*, *Taj*-i *arsalnaka* (the crown of the messengers) and as a moon among the stars (moon among the Companions).

In a popular Kashmiri *n'at*, Faqir Mir marvelously portrays of the Creator's love for the Prophet (SAW). The main focus is on the Prophet's (SAW) supernal personality with regard to *Tawhid* (*illallah*). It was through the Prophet (SAW) that mankind came to know Allah. He extols the Prophet's (SAW) greatness with reference to the Quranic verse (*wa huwa ma 'kum doupnas panai chhus nishanai illallah*) and titles like Taha, Yasin. The poet then traces the spiritual links of some of the Sufis of Kashmir like Sayyid Ali Hamadani, Shaikh Nuruddin Wali, Shaikh Hamza Makhdum and Khwaja Naqshband Mushilkusha to the Prophet (SAW), the Rightly Guided *Khulafa* and Sayyid 'Abdu'l-Qadir Jilani. [48] In the following verses, Faqir Mir's eulogisation of the protégés of Allah and their shrines is emphasized:

اولیا سأری نور نورانۍ پور ساماۍ گوڈ وُچھان
حضرتن ہندی چھ تیم ذُرداۍ چھُس نشاۍ اِلااللہ
ندا بو چھُس پرتھ آستاۍ بأدی تہٕ مہدی تیم بُتھ آے
مُندا چانم ے عرفانۍ چھُس نشانۍ اِلااللہ

Pir 'Abdu'l-Qadir Qadeer's poem on Allah's love for the Prophet (SAW) is also recited at the shrine of Hazratbal. It likens Kashmir to Madina [49] in view of the importance of the sacred relic of the Prophet for the Muslims of Kashmir:

مدینہٕ ہیوٗ چھُ باغ ملکِ کشمیر
زِ آثار بِکو موۓ محمدؐ
پیٚوٚمت چھے عرشہٕ پیٹھ فرشس تام
نوا غونا تہٕ ہے ہوۓ محمدؐ

Among several *n'ats*, composed by the renowned Kashmiri poet, Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, two deserve special mention because of their reference to the shrine of Hazratbal

and the oppression of the Dogra rulers. In one of the poems the poet seeks the pardon of the Prophet (SAW) at the entrance gate of the Hazratbal shrine for the sins of his humble lovers. He longs for the grace of the Prophet (SAW) in view of the concept of *rahmat* or grace the Prophet (SAW) personifies. In another poem the poet portrays the oppression of the Kashmiris at the hands of the Dogra rulers. While highlighting the mystical love of the faithful for Madina, he describes the Hazratbal as a refuge for the oppressed Kashmiris. [50]

آس لاران شاہِ کونین　　آتھ داران یا شاہِ کونین
چھس بہ تھاران یا شاہِ کونین　　خون ہاران یا شاہِ کونین
یام ہاوکھ جلوہٕ انور　　دادٕر لد دِل بلبم ژٔلہٕ نم شر
پیہوے آرزو ببتھ دِلس اندر　　چھس بو پراران یا شاہِ کونین
عاشقن راتھ دوہ مدتیچ کل　　ناتواں کینہہ دوران چھہ حضرت بل
لولہٕ چانہٕ پئے ہوان یوان بہ تل　　چھی ژٔرے ژھاران یا شاہِ کونین
باغ اسلام وحدتک گلشن　　اوس شولان خراب کور ظلمن
ژدونن پنہٕ دُبارٕ پوشہٕ پھولن　　ترٲو باران یا شاہِ کونین
چانہٕ وتہٕ لارنک سبتھاہ چھم غرز　　آتھ چھون کوت واتہٕ گر کیا سنز
چھس فراقس تہٕ اشتیاقس منز　　دوہ گذاران یا شاہِ کونین
فوج ظالم ژُبتھ تیر و کمان　　ناو ببہٕ واتر چانہٕ بے سامان
چانہٕ یاری شفاعتک سامان　　تم چھہ گاران یا شاہِ کونین

آو مجبور بہ دَرِ سرکارا!
بوزتس زار ہاوتس دیدارا!
تس چھہ وانجہ چانہٕ لولک نار
شولہٕ ماران یا شاہِ کونین

Rafiqi's *Saiyid Madinuk sardar denuk* [51], Samad Mir's inner satisfaction (*warih sath chham lare dargah*) in being a devotee of Hazratbal in his most popular panegyric *qad chounai wucch me bala* [52] etc. show the

impact of the shrine of Hazratbal in inspiring the muse of the poets. Although the poet Rafiqi does not directly refer to the shrine in the poem under reference, his reference to the *ziyarat* has the context of the spiritual and social environment of the shrine of Hazratbal. The very fact that his popular *n'at* is recited with great ardour on the eve of Shab-i- *Milad* and Shab-i-*M'iraj* substantiates this point: [53]

سیّد مدینک سردار دینک   مُلکِ یقینک ژےٚ چھکھ شاہنشاہ
روےِ تو انور موےِ تو عنبر   جسمِ تو اطہر لعلِ تو دل خواہ
جنت چھےٚ ژیران آسمان چھےٚ پارَان   سارَی چھکھ نیران مقبولِ اللہ
اَز کھارِ جانِس رب آسمانس   صاحبِ شانس صلوٰت اللہ
ساعت بہ ساعت چھےٚ اطاعت   یتھی کر اطاعت تٔمی کٔر پروو مولا
باوتھ یتیمس وَتھ تٔمی کٔر زیوٚن جنت   یتھی تروو بدعت تٔس کیا چھکھ پروا
باوتھ زیارت گٲلتھ شرارت   آیِ بشارت نصرٌ من اللہ
توحید پوٚلتھ تثلیث گوٚلتھ   تکلیف ژٔلتھ لِلّٰہ باللہ
یَم دینہٕ نِش ڈٔلی نارس اندر گٔژھ   یَم شرع نِش ژٔلی تِم مؤدی گمراہ
اے گنجِ رحمت چھےٚ چانٛی اُمت   چھیم چانٛی منت ییٚتہٕ ترٛاو ہم زاہ
تھٔر چھم نہ دٲنی مُتھ چھم سےٚ چانٛی   تھوٚ فکر میٲنی لِلّٰہ و فی اللہ
چھم ہول سپنس گوچھ با مدینس   تٔس نازنینس وندٕ با جگر با!
حقہٕ بنِد سایہ کر میون پایہ   بوٚڑ چھون سایہ تھٔر چانٛی درگاہ
چھم ہول چھےٚ وَندہٕ کروٚے   بوٚڑ شانہٕ چھےٚ اللہ اللہ
نیکی گرم نہٕ مؤلے سوزم نہٕ   پروا بوزم نہٕ استغفر اللہ
یوٚدوے رفیقی بوڑمت بہ عصیان   چھم چھون ارمان الحمدُ للہ

The veneration of the Prophet (SAW) alone is not the theme of Rafiqi's *n'at*, but also his faith in the virtuosity of his faith. His inner faith springs from his belief that the *ziyarat* of the holy relic will put an end to his anxiety. It is a prelude to the ultimate triumph of the right over wrong. But Rafiqi's veneration of the relic in no way amounts to the deviation from either the *Tawhid* or

the *Shari'ah*. This is clearly reflected in the verses quoted above.

Rafiqi has struck balance between *Shari'ah* and Sufism. It was an age when the Ahl-i-*Hadith* movement in Kashmir had started challenging the age-old belief of the Kashmiri Muslims in the efficacy of the shrines. The fact that Rafiqi's *n'at* continues to be recited even today by the devotees with enthusiasm suggests two points: First, the *dargah* of Hazratbal serves as a very important stronghold for preserving the Kashmiri Sufi tradition in both poetry and the religious life of the Kashmiris. Second, emphasis on adhereing to the *Shari'ah* in Kashmiri poetry counteracts all that is considered to be an innovation (bidah) or deviation from the Quran and the *Sunnah*.

Mirza Ghulam Hasan Baigh 'Arif is one of the eminent Kashmiri poets who died a few years ago. One of his *n'ats* seems to have been inspired by the solemn as well as picturesque environment of the Hazratbal. Sitting under a shadowy chinar[54] trees in the garden of Haztratbal, the poet urges the devotees to communicate to the Prophet the deplorable condition of the Kashmiris.

حضرت بل کس بوزیہ شیچارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
ونہٕ سردارس نبیؐ مختارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
نورٕ ترأوتھ چھ اَکٕ لاراں نارس   سینہٕ نورأوتھ باوس حال
رحمتٕچ اَکھ نظر کر بیمارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
تسبیح ترأو آسہٕ نالٕ زنارس   گنیہ رچہ زنٕ ولٕ شرکن نال
مذہب ناو آسہٕ کور باپارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
وتھ ڈأج پأنسو دُنیا دارس   مذہب کتہٕ کتہٕ سومبرن مال
حاجتن راوُر دین لاچارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
اپُر گژھے ناو آسہٕ واو گٹہٕ کارس   یا حیات النبیؐ آسہٕ نۄتھ کھال
بڈٕ سۄتھ چاأنی چھم گنہگارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
نفسکہٕ یارٕ بلہٕ گنڈ تیکہٕ تارس   اصلہٕ چھین چشمن پیٹھ زٕلری زال
پیروی گر آسہٕ نفسِ امارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
ظاہر زون آسہٕ حاصل کارس   باطنس عشقی کور آسہٕ جال
دیتہٕ دُنیا آسہٕ گاٹہٕ پو زارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال
خاکس کیمیا نور بنیہٕ نارس   زندگی پھیر آسہٕ پیٹھ اقبال
رحمتک آلو گوژھ ناکارس   ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال

عارف چھ مشتاق از دیدارس
یا نبیؐ وتلک پرد تھوو کھال
دُوربر روک چھنہٕ اظہارس
ونہٕ سردارس اُمتک حال

But he is critical of those who have either corrupted religion or made it means for exploiting people for personal material gains. The obvious reference is to the custodians of the shrines.

The *dargah* of Hazratbal is situated on the banks of Dal Lake. The poet is inspired by the boats moored in the Dal Lake on the eastern side of the *dargah*. The sunken boat is used as a metaphor for the loss of independence of the Kashmiris. So he invokes the help of the Eternal Prophet (Hayat an-Nabi) to steer

the boat out of danger. The sinking boat connotes the developments taking place in Kashmir after the Partition. [55]

Arif ultimately believes that the Kashmiris will have the good fortune to live with honour again. However, the precondition for achieving such a goal in poet's imagination is the cleansing of the pestering self (*nafs*-i-*ammara*). Therefore the devotees of the *dargah* of Hazratbal ought to have inner piety. He wants to preserve the spiritual heritage or pristine simplicity of Islam by way of making a distinction between Islam as personal faith and inner piety, and Islam as an instrument of exploitation in the hands of those who trade in it. The emerging point is Arif's concern for both preserving the spiritual heritage of Islam as well as safeguarding it against those exploiters of religion who masquerade as spiritualists.

General Remarks

A careful study of the devotional behaviour of Kashmiri Muslims at the various shrines of the Valley offers several useful insights to historians and social anthropologists. In the first place, devotion to Allah, the Prophet (SAW), the Companions, and the protégés of Allah (*auliya*) has given a certain meaning to the social and religious life in Kashmir. The frequent visits of the devotees to the shrines testify the fact. It is not merely the illiterate or the folk who flock to the shrines but also scores of educated people. The collective recitation of *n'ats* and *manqabats* at the shrines gives an indescribable inner satisfaction to the devotees. Moreover, in several respects, it makes them aware of their historical role in passing on the tradition of Islam as the religion of love from one generation to another. This is what they have to say: "We remember our *agha* (Master) collectively. We cry. We shed tears. Our expression of sorrow at the sacred premises of the shrines is genuine. We appeal to Allah, the Prophet (SAW) and the *auliya* ... They hear our appeals. The *darbar* held at the shrines is a court of justice for us. The worldly rulers can be unjust and of course they have been unjust. But our Lord cannot be unjust. In most cases, justice is done, in certain cases it is delayed for reasons best known to the Master but in our own interest. We come here in the hope of being heard."

References and Notes

1. The Quran is critical of the poets at several places: "And the Poets,__ It is those straying in Evil, who follow them: Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every Valley? And that they say what they practise not?__Except those who believe, work righteousness, engaged much in the remembrance of Allah, and defend themselves after they are unjustly attacked ..." The Holy Quran (Surah 26: verses 224-26) ; "We have not instructed the (Prophet) in poetry ... (Ibid., Surah 36: Verse 69); "It is not the word of a poet ..." (Ibid., Surah 69: Verse 41). 'Allama Yusuf 'Ali observes; "Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may on the contrary be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger they may be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere ("they say what they do not") or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility. They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light".: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary, 'Allama Yusuf 'Ali, p. 1085, Note. 3237. Again, Yusuf 'Ali comments on the verse 227 of chapter 26: "Poetry and fine arts which are to be commended are those which emanate from minds steeped in Faith, which try to carry out in life the fine sentiments they express in their artistic work, aim at the glory of Allah rather than at self-glorification or the fulsome praise of men with feet of caly, and do not (as in jihad) attack anyting except aggressive evil. In this sense a perfect artist should be a perfect man. Perfection may not be attainable in this life, but it should be the aim of every man, and especially of one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials. Among the commendable poets contemporary with the holy Prophet may be mentioned Hassan and Labid: the latter had the honour of being one of the seven whose poems were selected for "hanging" (the Mu'allaqat) in the Days of Ignorance. Ibid., p. 1086, Note 3238

2. Hisan bin Thabit, a companion of the Prophet, was the first to versify the virtues of the Prophet. His famous n 'at continues to be recited by some khatibs their sersmons. Nur Agur, a collection of the *n'atiya* poetry in Arabic, Persian and Kashmiri. Compiled by Mirza 'Arif and Bashir Akhtar and published by the Jammu and Kashmir Academcy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, 1987, p. 32. Among other companions of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, 'Ali, Abdullah bin Rawwaha, K 'ab bin Zubair and 'Abbas bin Mutalib are also said to have indulged in *n'atiya* poetry. Ibid., p.42

3. The Quran prefers secret remembrance (*zikr*-i *khafi*) though it nowhere forbids the believers from remembering Allah loudly. In Kashmir, however, *zikr*-i *jahr* was not simply chosen for invoking the Almighty alone but also for invoking the Prophet (SAW), his (SAW) Companions and the Sufis. We may cite only historical reason for the

latter development. In the Hindu-Buddhist surroundings of Kashmir, in addition to the meditation of the Rishis and Sufis in the solitude of forests, caves, mountains or secluded places for elevating their inner selves, loud recitation of *awrad* served both spiritual and social purpose.

4. *Nur Agur*, p. 177
5. Ibid, pp. 72-74
6. Ibid., pp. 75-76
7. Ibid., 77-78
8. Ibid., p.84
9. Ibid., p. 82
10. Ibid., p. 95
11. Ibid., pp. 88-93
12. Ibid., pp. 96-108
13. Ibid., 113-19. Shaikh Yaqub Sarfi
14. Ibid., 120-21. Khwaja Habibu'llah Naushahri
15. Ibid., p. 122. Mirza Akmalu'd-Din
16. Maulana Jami
17. Nur Agur., p. 99
18. The Quranic expression "Ya rahmatan lil 'alamin" is always on the lips of the devotees at the shrine of Hazratbal.
19. Several Kashmiri poets have designated the *dargah* of Hazratbal as Madina-i-Thani or the second Madina.
20. Persian term meaning fine, nice and lovely.
21. Arabic word meaning the moon. The chapter 54 of the Quran is titled al-Qamar.
22. Arabic word meaning the sun. The chapter 91 of the Quran is titled as-Shams or the Sun.
23. Persian word meaning the mirror.

24. Arabic word meaning prayer-niche of a mosque.

25. Rainbow

26. Derived from the Quran meaning splendour of the sun. The first two verses of the chapter 91 of the Quran read: "By the Sun and his (glorious splendour); By the Moon as she follows him ..."

27. Chapter 36 of the Quran. This particular chapter is devoted to the holy Prophet (SAW) and the Revelation which he brought. According to Allama Yusuf 'Ali: "The Abbreviated letters Ya-Sin are usually construed as title fo the holy Prophet ... This Sura, is considered to tbe 'the heart of the Quran', as it concerns the central doctrine of Revelation and the Hereafter. As referring to the Hereafter, it is appropriately read at the death-bed." The 'Allama summarises the message of the chapter thus: "The Quran is full of wisdom, and those are unfortunate who cannot profit by it: Parable of City that defied __ all but one __ the Messengers of Grace and Mercy." This chapter describes various Signs of Allah in nature and Revelation.

28. A famous hadith-i-Qudsi reads: "I was a hidden treasure. I wanted to be known and so created the creation." (*Kuntu kanzan makhfiyya fa ahbabthu an 'urafa fa khalaqthul khalqa*). This along with other hadith forms the basis of Sufism which reads: "Worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state then at least feel as He is seeing you."

29. *Nur Agur*, pp. 103-04

30. Ibid., p. 105

31. Ibid., p. 106

32. Ibid., p. 88

33. Ibid, pp. 239-40; Kalam-i-Shaikhu'l-'Alam

34. Nur Agur, pp. 241-42

35. Ibid., p. 243

36. Born in 1765, Mahmud Gami died in 1855. He was an eye-witness to the misrule and oppression of the Kashmiris during the three successive reigning dynasties viz., the Afghans who were overthrown by the Sikhs in 1819 and the latter replaced by the Dogras in 1846.

37. Ibid., pp. 244-45

38. Ibid., p. 248

39. Ibid., pp. 249-50

40. Ibid., p. 251

41. Ibid., pp. 258-59

42. Ibid., p. 260

43. Ibid., pp. 261-62

44. Ibid., p. 263

45. Ibid., pp. 264-65

46. Ibid., pp. 309-10

47. Ibid., pp. 311-13

48. Ibid., pp. 314-16

49. Ibid., pp. 317-18

50. Ibid., p. 329

51. Ibid., p. 330

52. Ibid., pp. 331-32

53. Ibid., p. 330

54. Ibid., pp. 349-50

55. Ibid.

IX
Conclusion

This research work has been inspired by a socio-religious phenomenon associated with the major shrines of the Kashmir Valley. Its focus is on the creative nature of 'human agency' and its interaction with structures in society including particularly religious and cultural 'meanings'. [1] My special concern has been with the unique and the particular, [2] in time and space. What has granted a rhythm of its own to this phenomenon is a remarkable degree of steadfastness shown by the devotees of the shrines. This has ensured viability of the unique and the particular. Without getting entangled in any theory or theology, systematic attention has been paid to human creativity and subjectivity. The intimate experiences of devotees' everyday life and certain fascinating facets of human psyche have been brought to the surface for the first time.

The daily practices and experiences of the devotees at the shrines may or may not be valid from conflicting theological standpoints. What, however, matters in historical, social and psychological terms is their lasting and benign influence on the human mind as well as the society. In order to explore such a

fascinating but a complex phenomenon, I did not start my investigation with a preconceived notion or even a hypothesis. My endeavour has been to draw inferences from all related possible sources through several methodologies. My method and tools for understanding the significant phenomenona highlighted above have not been unlike those of anthropologists and sociologists. Apart from making a thoughtful examination of the literary sources, I have done a lot of field work. Photographs taken along with devotees' interviews, questionnaires, recording of the folk songs and *wanwun* on the eve of the *'urses* and even occasional participation in the ritual acts at the shrines have enabled me to tap the hitherto unutilized sources for reconstructing the history of what sociologists call 'lived Islam' [3]. This phenomenon points how a continuous and close interaction exists between religion and society in a historical process. Religion evokes a response; this results in adapting social mores to Islam in many ways like collective humming of *durud, awrad, n'at* and *manqabat*. 'Lived Islam' is what people believe to be a true religion. It may be different in many ways from what has been termed "Orthodox Islam", "Normative Islam" and so on. But this apparent distinction is marked by mystical love, dilemmas and tensions. It shifts between various sensibilities and convictions thereby making Islam a progressive rather than a retrogressive force. This is evident from the role of the Ahl-i-Hadith, the Jamat-i-Islami and even the seminaries affiliated to the Deoband school of thought in bringing the religious life of the devotees of the shrines in consonance with the spirit of the Quran and the *Sunnah*. During my field work, besides a large number of the credulous devotees of the shrines, I found two categories of Muslims viz., who do not visit the shrines at all under the influence of religious reform movements and who visit the shrines not for the fulfillment of their worldly wishes but mainly for offering prayers in a congregation.

Despite the changes taking place in the attitudes of the people towards the shrines, a large number of people visit the shrines. This social fact is evocative of the historical role played by the shrines in fostering traditions vital to Islam in Kashmir. My empirical study and analysis of *n'ats, manqabat, munajat* and *awrad* is revealing in many respects. The impact of such genre of literature on the development of human personality

and society is enduring. Ironically, such literature has generally been dismissed as less serious or not worthy of examination by professional historians for a long time. The main reason for the indifference has actually been historians' infatuation with the positivist model which does not take the unobservable and the unique seriously and focuses rather on "hard" and the so-called tested "facts" and "laws" of society. Taking a cue from Bruce Lawrence's observations on the importance of *awrad* and other religious [4] literature and, more importantly, not ignoring the relevance of this kind of literature from the perspective of the *Annales'*. [5] emphasis on studying history or mentalities in totality, my research has focussed on meaning, symbols, agency and the subjects' own voice __ the issues that have now become central in the discourses of social scientists. Keeping also in view the fact that post-modernists [6] have shown "openness to meaning and authority from unexpected places", the ultimate source of authority is the "play" of the discourse itself. Seen from such a perspective, continued collective intonation of *n'at, manqabat* and *awrad* provide us useful clues for understanding the collective psyche of the devotees of the shrines.

The continued persistence of the devotees of the shrines to follow the age-old traditions like group intonations of many sorts, *khatmat* on the eve of *'urses* and specific days renders such categorizations of Islam as the so-called "orthodox Islam" [7] and the "folk-Islam" debatable. In my opinion, the history of mentalities, localities, everyday life etc. concerning rituals at the major shrines of the Valley has itself become orthodoxy. It is noteworthy that neither the *khatibs* at the shrines nor the devotees ever feel tired of revitalizing the historical, social and spiritual links of the Kashmiris with the shrines. Although shrines have their distinctive characteristics and identities, their institutionalization over centuries has evolved common modes of behaviour. The traditional beliefs about the efficacy of the shrines espoused by the *khatibs* in their sermons and the practices followed at the shrines have generally been approved by the ulama well versed in the Quran, *hadith* and *fiqh* and, therefore, accepted almost as "norms" by the masses. The role of Anjuman-i-Tablighu'l-Islam under the inspiring leadership of a scholar like late Saiyid Qasim Shah Bukhari in highlighting the importance of the shrines in Kashmiri Muslims' religious life is

firmly etched on the minds of his contemporaries. The *khatibs* and other *'ulama* affiliated to the Anjuman-i-Tablighul Islam continue to promote the tradition of holding *khatmat*. In fact, the devotees desirous of inviting the *'ulama* of the Anjuman-i-Tablighul Islam or their counterparts belonging to similar other religious associations to their homes for reading a *khatam* make their request in advance. Such orthodoxies of the adherents of the shrines are based on what they call *'itiqad* [7] as against *bad-'itiqad*.

Even despite their faulty nature, categorizations (of Islam as "folk" or "orthodox") [8] serve as useful tools of analysis for understanding the role of Islam in history, strictly as a religion on the one hand and a social phenomenon on the other. We have seen that there is no difference between the adherents of the shrines and their antagonists regarding the fundamentals of Islam. Shorn of some excesses on both sides in the form of verbal attacks (*bad-'itiqadis* against the *'itiqadis* and vice versa), their differing approaches to religion have helped in initiating a meaningful debate on Islam in Kashmir. The debate points to important areas of certainty and ambiguity on which both the groups need to ponder upon. The importance of *tawhid* (the Oneness of Allah) is evident in the devotees' acts of prostration during the prescribed congregational prayers alongside their veneration of the shrines. Yet a researcher cannot brush aside genuine criticism of the antagonists of the shrines concerning the devotees' idea of regarding shrines as a solution to their mundane problems.

This study has also shown the impact of the shrines on the growth and development of Kashmiri Muslim culture and consciousness. This has been extremely important to the formation of the distinct identity of Kashmiri Muslims. That is why the shrines were regarded as the strongholds of their identity by Kashmiri Muslim leadership since the emergence of political consciousness among them in the 1930s. Apart from the National Conference, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front also sought to mobilize public opinion through the ready-made platforms of the shrines. However, with the decline of the National Conference following its defeat at the last elections and the waning influence of JKLF in recent years, a new trend may be sighted about the positive roles the shrines might play in future. The major shrines of Srinagar having been brought

under the control of the Wakf Board during the Mufti regime, the National Conference no longer seems to have sway over the shrines. The Wakf Board now is not a subsidiary wing or a mouthpiece of any political party. However, its chairman and secretary are appointed by the government. The Islamic University of Science and Technology was found once the control of the shrines was taken over by the Wakf Board. One positive result of this development has been a sort of awareness among Muslims for the need to utilize the resources of the shrines for serving the cause of both religious and modern education. It is premature to dilate upon such a healthy development yet the role of the shrines as a social force to be reckoned with cannot go unnoticed in the Kashmiri society. There is yet another dimension to the social reality. It may be observed that lately the coalition government in power and the National Conference are vying with each other so as to ensure adequate arrangements for the comfort of the pilgrims of the shrines on the days of the *'urses*. The shrines under review seem to be embedded in socio-political structures in a complex way. But that is a question outside the scope of our explorations into Muslim religious life and rituals at some major shrines of the Valley.

Footnotes and References

1. Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, 1979; Peter Winch, *The idea of a Social Science*, Routledge and Kagan Paul, 1968; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Politics and Poetry of Ethnography*, 1986.

2. It should not, however, be supposed that I have been unconcerned with what E.H. Carr (*What is History*, Penguin, London, 1968) says to find general in the unique. In fact, my conclusion clearly brings out the importance of studying the unique and particular for promoting an objective understanding of some general or common patterns of Muslim life religious life and rituals at the shrines in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

3. Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, ed., *Lived Islam in South Asia, Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict*, ed., Social Science Press, Delhi, 2004. For Ishaq Khan 'lived Islam' is not poles apart from the so-called "normative" and

"orthodox" Islam. As Imtiaz Ahmad rightly points out: "Khan takes popular perceptions of Islam and social pratices to be mere reflections of what theology would prescribe. For him, what is practised is not unique or different. It is only a manifestation of the universalistic worldview of Islam." Ibid., Introduction xv. Richard Maxwell Eaton also highlights the importance of Khan's researches, "informed by greater sensitivity", in exposing "the inadequacies of entrenched scholarly dichotomies to the orthodox/heterodox opposition such as ...normative/popular ..." T.N. Madan lends weight to Khan's views on the totality of the religious experience of the Kashmiri Muslims in terms of a creative interaction between the so-called scriptural and 'lived' Islam. See Madan, "One From Many: Explorations into the Anthropology of Islam", *The Eastern Anthropologist*, 2007.

4. Bruce Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute: The Extant Literature of Pre-Mughal Indian Sufism,* Tehran, 1978.

5. Maurice Aymard and Harbans Mukhia, ed., *French Studies in History: The Inheritance*, vol. I, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1990.

6. Akbar S. Ahmad, *Postmodernism and Islam: Promise and Predicament*, Penguin, 1992.

7. In a recent publication, the *ahl-i- i'tiqad* are described in these words: "The term*'tiqad* is both a belief and a firm conviction that what they believe or what they firmly accept in the mind is true. As against (*iman*) which concerns action (*'amal*) and the confession (*iqrar), i'tiqad* is related to three degrees of certainty in the Quranic context: known, verified and evident (*'ilmu'l-yaqin*), manifest and witnessed (*'ainu'l-yaqin*) and the witnesser, the witnessed, the looker on, the looked on (*haqqu'l-yaqin*). Believing that the Sufis were gifted with all forms of both *iman* and *i'tiqad*, therefore, the Kashmiris calling themselves *ahl-i-i'tiqad* distinguish themselves from those who do not see beyond the literal interpretation of the Quran and the *Shari'ah*." See Ishaq Khan, "The Rishi Tradition and the Construction of *Kashmiriyat*" in Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, *Lived Islam in South Asia, Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict* , p. 62n.

8. According to Eaton, "The idea of an unchanging Islamic 'orthodoxy' derives in part from Orientalist assumptions that by the close of the tenth century, Islamic beliefs and institutions had become fixed in the form of the *shari'a*, Islamic Law. By that time, in this view, the fluid, formative

period of Islam had come to an end: the four schools of law acquired a definitive structure, the proper relationship between state and community was worked out, and the possibility of 'individual reasoning' (*ijtihad*) as a basis for scriptural interpretation ended. In the classic formulation, the gates of *ijtihad* had swung shut. ... In short, 'orthodoxy' depending on one's perspective, was judged either negatively as slavish imitation of tradition (Ar. *Taqlid*), or positively as God-given, universal, and unchangeable orthodoxy after the tenth century induced scholars to suppose that India's Islamic traditions, which did not fully emerge until the eleventh century, were destined to uncreative repetition." Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Themes in Indian History: India's Islamic Tradition,* 711-1750, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003; also "Indo-Muslim Traditions, 1200-1750: Towards a Framework of Study", in *South Asia Research,* 22, I, 2001, pp. 1-19.